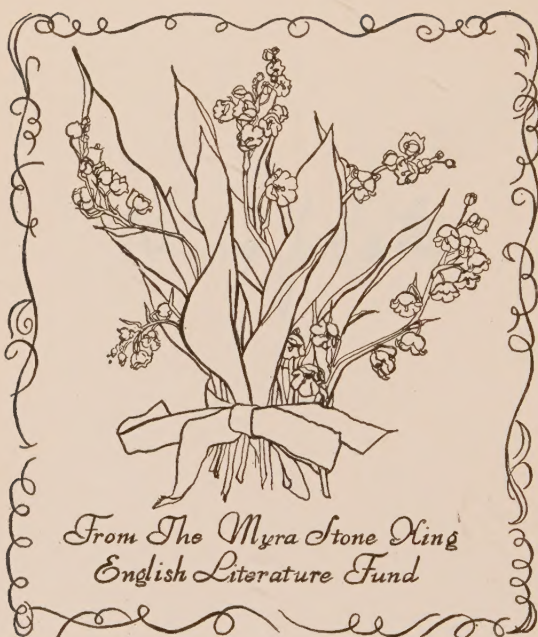




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ABSALOM GRIMES  
CONFEDERATE MAIL RUNNER









ABSALOM CARLISLE GRIMES  
(About 1863)

# ABSALOM GRIMES

## CONFEDERATE MAIL RUNNER

*Edited from*  
*Captain Grimes' Own Story*  
*By M. M. Quaife, of*  
*The Burton Historical Collection*



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## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

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THE volume which these lines are designed to introduce to the reader is chiefly devoted to narrating the remarkable Civil War career of Captain Absalom C. Grimes of Missouri. War is at best a frightful business, to be justified only where men fight for liberty or in defense of some fundamental principle of civilization. Especially tragic is it when a people finds itself rent in twain and brother fights against brother and community against community. From the mere viewpoint of its magnitude the American Civil War was one of the greatest conflicts ever waged. From the viewpoint of its intensity, and of the fierce determination displayed by the two contesting parties, it was likewise one of the greatest conflicts of which history makes record.

The generation to which the writer of these lines belongs is steeped in the atmosphere of the great struggle, for until a quarter of a century ago the "old soldier" was everywhere in America and his was the hand which chiefly guided the course of government and of society. Now, however, over sixty years have elapsed since Appomattox, and the youngest veteran is very close to his eightieth year. Ere long all of the remnant that still survives will have joined their comrades in the great beyond, and the Civil War will be to the rising generation what the Revolution is to the present one, a dim historical tradition.

The American Civil War has sometimes been called the Brothers' War. In such a conflict passions are likely to rise higher than in a war between foreign nations. Nowhere else in America did they rise so high as on the border line between North and South, where neighbor fought with neighbor and families were divided against themselves. Particularly in Missouri was the Civil War a four-year nightmare of bloody tragedy. Missourians of the older generation know the story all too well. Those of the younger, and

the people of the country as a whole, know little of it. To them the personal narrative of Captain Grimes, vividly reflecting the spirit of the time with which it deals, will come to a large extent as a revelation.

But the narrative possesses a more particular interest than this, of quite another sort. The situation of Missouri's soldiers in the Confederate army was a peculiar one. Comparatively early in the war the northern government gained control of the state, and save for an occasional irruption maintained it until the end of the struggle. Thereupon the Missouri battalions followed their beloved "Pap" Price and other chosen leaders southward, and until the close of the war they were separated from homeland and loved ones, fighting as soldiers in a foreign land. Worse than this, their homeland was in possession of the enemy; to it they could return only at imminent personal peril, and all communication with relatives and friends, save by subterfuge, was cut off. It was this situation which afforded the opportunity for Captain Grimes' unusual wartime career. Voluntarily he constituted himself mail carrier extraordinary between Missouri's Confederate battalions in the Southland and their distant relatives at home. Repeatedly he "ran the lines" between the two armies, incurring, whenever he entered the Union lines, the peril of apprehension as a spy. Repeatedly he was imprisoned and twice was he sentenced to death. Toward the end of his terrible experiences, his spirit, it is evident, neared the breaking point; that it did not break long before the war closed affords occasion only for wonderment. His narrative is a significant contribution to the history of the war in general and of the war in Missouri in particular. Nor need one be a sympathizer with the "lost cause" to entertain a feeling of admiration for the intrepid spirit of the man. Regardless of the merit of the cause for which he fought, Captain Grimes stands revealed as a dauntless soul, made of the stuff which conquered the continent for civilization and the American nation. He was an American in whom his countrymen may well take pride, and his narrative is native American literature of the best sort.

Something further should be said, however, by way of introducing Captain Grimes' personal story to the reader. He lived



until 1912, and in his closing years (1910-1911), largely at the solicitation of his daughter, the present narrative was written. To a considerable degree, therefore, it is an old-age narration, but the attentive reader will not fail to perceive that it is something more than this. The daughter (Mrs. Charlotte G. Mitchell of St. Louis) informs me that her father's memory was fortified by a war-time diary, written in a species of shorthand devised, apparently, by himself. This will serve to explain, at least in part, the recital of dates and other precise details not likely to have been carried in memory for almost half a century. Of the work of composition Mrs. Mitchell says: "It was written in the spring of 1910 and 1911. I had begged in vain for him to write the whole story years before he finally consented to dictate it to me. He said he did not want to recall the awful memories, and it took a great deal of persuasion and urging on my part to get him to begin it, but when he did begin he seemed to enjoy it and it served to shorten the weeks and months that held so little interest otherwise—he had many sorrows in his declining years, before his death at the age of seventy-seven. He wrote part of the story himself, with pencil, and dictated the rest of it to me. I took it in shorthand and wrote it upon the typewriter. He then reviewed it, making notations and corrections. Then I rewrote it, and he again went over it and approved it, and I typed it again. In all, it has been typed four times."

The possibilities for error in the narrative thus produced will be evident to the reader. As editor, I have endeavored to polish the composition, and have eliminated certain obvious errors of detail from the manuscript as it came to my hands. I have also excised considerable material which seemed to me of trivial importance or not essential to the presentation of the narrative. Dates and spelling of proper names have been verified in so far as practicable, but in the main these have necessarily gone unchecked, and must stand on the authority of Captain Grimes and his daughter, who collaborated in the work of reducing the narrative to writing. Captain Grimes writes with the bias of a participant in the war, but no reader, we think, will question his good faith, or his evident desire to record the truth as he saw it.

On the first page of his manuscript he wrote: "This volume contains no fiction or fictitious names or characters. All is truth as my memory serves me to recall the incidents." That a conscientious effort has been made to produce a truthful narrative we have no doubt. On the faith of a brave man it is presented to the reader.

M. M. QUAIFFÉ

*Burton Historical Collection,  
Detroit, August 1, 1926.*

# ABSALOM GRIMES

## CONFEDERATE MAIL RUNNER

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### CHAPTER I.

#### CAMPAIGNING WITH MARK TWAIN

I WAS born near Anchorage, Jefferson County, Kentucky, fourteen miles from Louisville, on August 22, 1834. Soon after this event my parents moved to St. Louis. My father, William Leander Grimes, was a pilot on the upper Mississippi River from St. Louis to Dubuque. He was employed on the *William Wallace*, one of the first steamboats that navigated the upper Mississippi. This vessel belonged to Captain Absalom Carlisle, my mother's uncle, for whom I was named.

In the year 1850 I was employed as a messenger boy for the Morse Telegraph Company, whose only competitor in the St. Louis field was the O'Reilly Telegraph Company. Esrom Pickering, a grandson of St. Louis' first coroner, was messenger for the O'Reilly Company, and he and I were the first telegraph messenger boys of St. Louis. During my employment by the Morse Company I had occasion to deliver a telegram to Jenny Lind, the famous "Swedish Nightingale," who gave a concert under the direction of P. T. Barnum at the old Wyman Hall. When I handed the message to her in her room at the Planter's House she asked me if the people at the

telegraph office had received passes to her concert. I told her I had not and she took a visiting card from her case and wrote on the reverse side: "Pass bearer to my concert and charge same to my account." That pass made me the proudest boy in St. Louis. I attended the concert and sat on the steps leading to the platform on which Miss Lind stood while she sang. The seats had been sold at auction to the highest bidder and brought fabulous prices. John McNeil, who subsequently became notorious for his part in the butchery of Confederate prisoners at Palmyra, Missouri, bought the first seat, paying the sum of twelve hundred dollars for it.

In the fall of 1850 I went on the steamer *Uncle Toby* with my father to learn the river as a pilot, and in the spring of 1852 obtained my first license. This was the first year government licenses were required of pilots and captains. I served as pilot between St. Louis and St. Paul from 1852 to 1861. At the latter date I was serving on the steamer *Sunshine*, of which Captain Willard was owner and master. A pilot's license was issued for the term of one year and on applying for a renewal pilots were required to take an oath to abide by the regulations governing pilots, engineers, mates, and captains, but such a thing as compelling a man who had been born and reared in the United States to take the oath of allegiance to the government was unknown. In May, 1861, my license expired and I went to the office of the United States inspector for the purpose of having it renewed. A diminutive, beer-soaked German, who had gained his place through the exercise of political pull, was occupying the responsible position of inspector. To him I stated the purpose of my call. He drew from

the drawer of his desk a document headed, "Oath of Allegiance," and, handing it to me, told me to fill out the blanks. When I had filled out the blanks on the license side he directed me to hold up my hand and take the oath. I inquired the reason for this new departure and he replied in broken English that the "Secesh" were trying to disrupt the Union and everyone who wanted a license must take the oath. I indignantly told him that I had been born in this country, as were my father and grandfather before me. I had no objection to taking the oath but when I did it would not be from an alien. I then walked out, followed by Sam Bowen and Samuel L. Clemens, who had entered the office just after I had and had thus overheard my conversation with the inspector.

Clemens, Bowen, and I lived in and near Hannibal, Missouri. We decided to go home and visit our families a few weeks (none of us were married) and by that time the secession disturbance would be settled and we could obtain licenses without taking the oath. We went to Hannibal and while there we three pilots visited the levee every morning when the regular Keokuk packets came up from St. Louis and landed there. On the fourth morning we were sitting on a pile of skids about two hundred yards below the landing. The steamer *Hannibal City* came up the river and landed about nine o'clock. To our surprise a Federal lieutenant and four privates came off the boat. After a few words with Jerry Yancey (the boat agent) they turned and walked down the levee to where we were sitting. The lieutenant bade us good morning and pulling a document out of his pocket, asked if our names were Grimes, Bowen, and Clemens? We assented. He said, "I have an order from



General John B. Grey, commander of the District of St. Louis, to escort you three gentlemen to his headquarters." We demurred, but upon his statement that he had been ordered to take us to St. Louis and if we went peacefully would treat us like gentlemen, while if we resisted he would be obliged to put us in irons and take us by force, we decided to cause him (and ourselves) no trouble. He and the privates accompanied us to our homes in Hannibal to get our clothing and bid our families farewell. We took the next boat for St. Louis, the steamer *Harry Johnson*. We were permitted to sleep in staterooms with guards at our doors. The boat left Hannibal at six in the afternoon and arrived at St. Louis at seven o'clock the next morning. We remained aboard until ten o'clock, when we were escorted to General Grey's headquarters in the Oak Hall Building on the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Washington Avenue, where the Norvell-Shapleigh Hardware Company's building now stands.

The lieutenant introduced us by name, in turn, to General Grey and handed him the commission which he had read to us in Hannibal. The general dismissed him and his men. When they had gone he turned to us and said: "Gentlemen, I understand you three men are pilots and were in Hannibal on a vacation. It seems that the pilots are nearly all Secesh, as they are hard to get hold of. I want to send a lot of boats (carrying soldiers) up to Boonville, on the Missouri River, the latter part of this week." We told him we were not Missouri River pilots and knew only the Mississippi River. He said: "You could follow another boat up the Missouri River if she had a Missouri pilot on her, could you not?" We had to admit

that we could accomplish that. "That is all that is necessary," he rejoined.

Just then two stylishly dressed ladies appeared at the office door and greeted General Grey, remarking that they would like to consult him upon some special business as soon as he was at leisure. He requested them to go into a room across the hall and he would join them in a moment. He then asked us to excuse him until he found out what the ladies wanted. We were pleased to do so! He left the room and we immediately picked up our baggage and went out the side door and downstairs to the street, leaving General Grey to enjoy his tête-a-tête with the ladies. After a short consultation we decided to go back to Hannibal, where we thought the authorities would not bother us any more. I went to my mother's home in Ralls County, twelve miles west of Hannibal.

A short time afterwards the war excitement reached old Ralls and one fine morning I learned that a whole brigade of recruits had formed a camp at Nuck Matson's home, two miles west of New London. I had become quite enthusiastic in the Southern cause so I went over to review the troops assembled at Matson's in behalf of the South. I found that the "brigade" consisted of ten young men, most of whom were my friends. Among them were Charley Mills, Jack Coulter, Tom Lyon, Ed Stephens, Sam Bowen, Sam Clemens (Mark Twain), Asa Fuqua, and a few others. The recruits were undetermined what destructive move they would make first. On the suggestion of someone nearly all of them had their hair cut off as short as possible so as to allow the enemy no advantage in close quarters. Tom Lyon acted as barber, using a pair of sheep-shears. Any hair that

escaped cutting was pulled out by the shears. I joined the brigade, and, mounting an empty vinegar keg, which was placed under a shade tree, had my hair sheared.

Neighboring farmers who were in sympathy with the South provided horses for those who had none. After much deliberation and discussion of plans we decided to move our camp westward, as we heard that some of the Union army would be in Hannibal shortly and we were liable to be captured at any moment by them. We wanted time to organize and drill before their arrival. No two soldiers wore the same equipment. It would be useless for me to try to describe the appearance of that brigade when mounted. Nothing was uniform except that we all rode astride. I will mention especially but one "war horse," the one that had been presented to Mark Twain. He was a little yellow mule, as frisky as a jack-rabbit. He had long, erect ears, was about four feet high, and carried his tail sticking straight out on a dead level with his back. He looked as if he had been mounted on the vinegar keg, and Lyon, the company barber, had used the sheep-shears on the wrong end, for his tail was shaved as with a razor to within six inches of the end—which resembled a painter's only tool. He was promptly christened "Paint Brush" by his master. On this little mule were located Mark Twain, one valise, one carpetsack, one pair of gray blankets, one home-made quilt, one frying pan, one old-fashioned Kentucky squirrel rifle, twenty yards of sea-grass rope, and one umbrella. The donor of the mule was Harvey Glascock.

We proceeded west until we reached the home of Colonel Bill Splawn, where we had supper and re-

mained over night. Next day the brigade went over to Colonel John Ralls' home. He gave us a lecture on the importance of our mission, etc., and after his statement that he was duly authorized by Governor Jackson to enroll recruits for the Southern army, we were all sworn in. Then for the first time we realized that someone was going to get into trouble. That afternoon we rode northwest about five miles to Goodwin's mill, which was, I think, located on a branch of Salt River. There we found another squad of men who had organized a company and called themselves the Salt River Tigers. Their appearance would have filled the enemy with terror and caused a stampede equal to that of Bull Run. A blacksmith had completed their equipment by providing each man with a huge saber, or knife, made from scythes, sickle bars, long files, and goodness knows what else. Among the Tigers were some musicians, the Martin brothers and two others, and they were the orchestra.

When we visited their camp and watched the Tigers drawn up in line, answer to roll call, etc., it occurred to us that we should have someone to take command, give orders, plan a campaign, and instruct us in military drills, so we decided to elect officers. The nominations for captain were William Ely and Asa Glascock, the former being elected. Then Glascock was unanimously elected first lieutenant. Sam Bowen nominated Mark Twain for second lieutenant and he was promptly elected. Sam Bowen was made sergeant and Tom Lyon orderly sergeant. After all the officers had been elected we had three or four men to serve as privates. We called upon Mark Twain for a speech. After some hesitation because of such

a large audience (the Tigers were present) he mounted a log, blushing, and said: "You would scarce expect one of my age to speak in public on the—this log. Well, boys, I thank you for electing me your lieutenant. I will try to do my duty and the square thing by you, but I can not make a speech." Captain Ely then commanded us to meet next morning in a certain prairie for drill, as there were no fields in the neighborhood large enough—although some contained sixty or more acres. We dispersed, going in different directions to farmhouses for supper and lodging. I went with some others to Mr. Washington Clayton's home. Next morning before going to the prairie for drill we assembled at the home of Colonel John Ralls.

When I left New London, Colonel Hanceford Brown gave me an old sword and belt that he had worn in the Mexican War and his father had used in the War of 1812. While at Colonel Ralls' I concluded our second lieutenant should have a sword. He was a pilot on the lower Mississippi River and I was an upper Mississippi pilot. We had been friends long before we went into the Southern army. I requested Colonel Ralls to make the presentation speech, which he did, and Mark Twain responded. We then rode to the prairie, drew up in line, and waited for Captain Ely to report—which he never did from that day to this. Lieutenant Glascock finally assumed command of the Ralls County Rangers, as we had named our company. We made camp in a secluded spot on Salt River, somewhere in the edge of Monroe County, close to an old farmhouse. After we had camped there about two days we were joined by Burr Mc-



Pherson of Hannibal, who acted as commander and drill master.

We had no tents, so we cut sticks and stuck them into the ground and spread some of our blankets and quilts over them. As for food, the most important part of the expedition, we had very little of any kind. The boys went foraging and brought in corn meal, fat side-meat and some sorghum. This constituted our bill of fare during the entire two weeks we remained there. It rained all the time we were there. Salt River was bank-full ready to overflow. Near our camp was located a log barn belonging to the farmhouse. We used the barn as headquarters. There was a room across each end and a gangway between the rooms which was about fifteen feet wide and covered with a clapboard roof. In this gangway we did our cooking, as it was too wet outside to have a fire. Along each side of the gangway was a large trough in which we fed our horses and at night Clemens and I slept in it.

Someone brought us the news that the Yankee army was coming out of Hannibal in full force—that it would leave the railroad at Monroe City and march straight to our camp. This report created much excitement and we decided to put out a picket guard. Sam Bowen, Ed Stephens, and myself were selected as the most reliable men for pickets, as we had been pilots and could keep awake better than the others. Mark Twain was placed in charge of the picket guards and we started after dark for our post two miles north of camp, at the mouth of a lane leading to Monroe City. Opposite the mouth of the lane were some trees and bushes, to which we tied our horses. We shook some dimes in a hat to see who would stand

first, second, and third watch, as we deemed it unnecessary for all of us to remain awake all night.

Bowen stood at the mouth of the lane from eight to eleven o'clock, when I took his place to remain until three. At one o'clock I heard the enemy coming and I roused the other two soldiers. Lieutenant Clemens mounted "Paint Brush" and held our horses' bridles, while we went to the mouth of the lane to observe the movements of the enemy. I stood in front and thus commanded the best view. Presently I saw them rise over the top of the hill and swerve from left to right. I raised my double-barrel shotgun and fired both barrels into their ranks. Without remaining to see how many were killed we turned and ran for our horses. To our horror we saw our lieutenant more than a hundred yards off and still going. We called to him to halt, and finally Bowen leveled his shotgun and yelled, "Damn you, Sam, if you don't stop I'll let her go!" Clemens halted, and when we caught up with him (Bowen still swearing) he said, "'Paint Brush' got so excited I could not hold him." We mounted and rode away at full speed for our camp, leaving our lieutenant and "Paint Brush" far in the rear. The last we heard of him he was saying, "Damn you, you want the Yanks to capture me!"

When we reached the camp the boys were all up in line in all sorts of rigs—coat and a pair of shoes, hat and a pair of pants, shirt and one boot, shirt and coat, shirt and a pair of socks, etc. We told them the cause of the firing and we all waited breathlessly for the enemy to approach. Presently a clatter of hoofs was heard coming down the ravine and the order was given to "make ready!" when we recollected that



our lieutenant and "Paint Brush" were still out. We called to Commander McPherson to hold fire, as it must be Clemens. And so it was! We drew a sigh of relief as he came into the gangway full tilt. He made no effort to stop "Paint Brush" until he had reached the rear end of the line and then you may bet his picket guards heard from him. Among other abuse he gave us was a special clause for the loss of his hat. We stood in line, momentarily expecting the enemy, until daylight, when we retired in good order.

After a meager breakfast I requested Sergeant Bowen to go with me to the mouth of the lane to see if the enemy had removed their dead. Upon arrival there I cautiously approached the fence corner and viewed the field of battle. I said, "Sam, I want to tell you something, but you must swear that you will never reveal a word of it to any living soul as long as you and I both live." He said he would swear and crossed his heart. "Do you see those tall mullein stalks on the side of that hill? Well, last night the wind probably caused them to wave and I would have sworn they were Federals on horseback." "Well, you damned fool, you played hell, didn't you?" was his only remark, but en route to camp we were jovial and joked about the lieutenant and "Paint Brush." The very first thing Bowen did when we reached camp was to tell the whole story and I was frequently reminded of those mullein stalks for many days.

One dark rainy night (I think it was the next one after I fired on the mullein stalks) a good-natured fellow by the name of Dave Young, who was usually about two-thirds full of whiskey, was placed as camp guard. During the night we were awakened by heavy tramping and we heard the guard cry out: "Halt

you! Are you going to halt and give the pass word?" The tramping continued and that, with the guard's order to halt, roused many of the boys. The guard cried out, "Halt, or I will fire!" and bang! bang! went both barrels of his gun. A heavy fall and a groan were heard, and out into the darkness the men rushed to the place whence proceeded the groan. There in the agony of death lay an old gray horse, the steed of the guard, Dave Young. He was standing over the animal looking quite sad.

Mark Twain had become afflicted with a boil and it was a source of much comfort to him that there were no stools or chairs in camp. Mark had a lot of straw put into the feed trough on the side of the gangway of the barn and spent all of his time lying on the straw and wondering at the great amount of patience possessed by Job in olden times.

For a few days nothing occurred to enthuse the troops to any extent. The fare grew thinner every day and we were discouraged and began to "thirst for blood." Talk of moving camp, advancing on the enemy, tearing up railroad tracks, and firing into cars carrying Yankees became general, but these topics and plans were not approved by our commander, Burr McPherson. He told us that General Tom Harris had been appointed to this division and district and that he would soon come to lead us on to victory or to death. About that time we learned that General Harris had been staying up at Clay Price's, two miles away, for a week, living on the fat of the land while we were in the swamp and rain, eating side-meat and corn bread. That settled matters and we began packing our belongings, intending to advance upon Monroe City at all hazards. Mark Twain

was lying in the trough, wracked by his boil, remonstrating with us for thus breaking camp and showing no military discipline after all of our training. We told him that we were after blood and railroad iron and were going on the warpath. As we were about to depart he raised up on one elbow and said: "If you are determined to go, it is no use for me to try to hold this position by myself. Ab, if you will saddle and pack up 'Paint Brush' I will join the army and go with you." I saddled the mule and placed all Mark's baggage on him, piling it in front and behind the saddle. Our lieutenant rolled out of the trough and mounted him. It was but a few steps to Salt River, which we had to cross, and the lieutenant could not persuade the mule to take water. After a great effort to make the mule go into the river Mark said, "Ab, I guess you will have to lead him in, he will not go for me." I tied one end of an inch rope around the mule's neck and took a turn with the other around the pommel of my saddle. After some maneuvering we got the mule close to the river bank and while he smelled of the water as if to drink I gave my horse a dig with my spurs and he made a jump far out into the stream, dragging the mule with him. The top of the bank where we started was only a foot above water and the water was eight or ten feet deep the first jump. On the opposite side of the river the road went out of the water gradually between two small hills. My horse swam vigorously for the other bank. I looked back over my shoulder to see how Mark and "Paint Brush" were faring. To my horror neither was in sight and I thought both had drowned. I hurried across, knowing the rope would bring the mule. I soon landed safely and after a few steps in

the edge of the water the top of Mark's old slouch hat, then Mark and the mule, in turn, showed up. As he slowly waded out of the water the mule was very weak and weaving from side to side. When he was entirely out of the water Mark rolled off and fell upon the bank, removed his hat, took his handkerchief from his pocket, wrung the water out of it, and slowly wiped his face. Looking up at me he said in his slow drawling tones, "Ab, that infernal mule waded every step of the way across that river!" The boys had all waited to see Mark and the mule cross.

We mounted and headed east. No one seemed to know or care where we were going. We had not proceeded a great way when our general, Tom Harris, met us. Few of us had met him, but Sam was well acquainted with him. He ordered us to return to camp, but we laughed at a stranger's assuming authority over us. He then requested us to go, but we did not respond. He begged us to go, but the recollection of that wet camp, the scant fare, and other discomforts caused us to refuse to return and we rode on to Colonel Clay Price's and had a good breakfast ere we proceeded on our journey eastward.

The day grew quite warm as we proceeded on our way. About three o'clock in the afternoon, tired and hungry, we stopped at a nice brick house by the side of the road. We tied our horses and went in. No one was in sight. Some of the boys seated themselves in the room, while the others stood about. Presently in came a thin, tall woman with cold gray eyes and light hair that was combed back tight. In a sharp tone she said, "What do you men want?"

Mark Twain acted as spokesman and said,

“Madam, we are tired and hungry and would like to have something to eat.”

“Get something to eat, would you? Well, you will not get it here!”

“We are willing to pay for it.”

“Pay nothing! Get yourselves out of here and that pretty quick or I will make you!” Reaching behind her to the head of the bed she seized a large hickory stick (used to beat up the featherbed) and started for Clemens. “Hold on, Madam! Don’t be so fast. Let us reason the case. We are gentlemen and intend to pay for food.”

“Do you think I am going to feed any Rebels and my husband a colonel in the Union army? Get out!”

By this time all the boys were out and mounting their horses, while I remained just in the rear of Mark as he slowly backed toward the door, fearing to turn around and expose his boil to the attack of the woman with the club. She was striking at his shins, keeping him bent nearly double. All the while he remonstrated with her about being so hasty, she was abusing the rebels and Secesh. After backing him out of the door she quit striking with the club, but kept her tongue on the warpath. After we had left her I asked Sam why he did not take his sword to her. “Do you think I would disgrace it by spilling the blood of a woman?” he answered. “But I believe she would just as soon hit me as not, if I had not kept out of her way.” We mounted and caught up with the other boys, who were roaring with laughter about our lieutenant’s battle with the Yankee woman. We met a man on the road who informed us that the house was owned by Colonel Tinker, who had been in



the Yankee army about three months. "Well, who is that woman?"

"That is Mrs. Tinker. She is the general at home!"

"I should remark she is!" commented Sam, as we rode on.

It was about one o'clock at night when we arrived at Colonel Bill Splawn's again and we were tired, hungry, and muddy. Owing to the lateness of the hour we did not disturb the family. We put our horses in the large barn and fed them, and then climbed into the loft to sleep on the hay. Mark selected a spot near the door in the gable end of the barn. Soon after we went to sleep someone yelled, "Fire!" Every fellow was up in an instant and, sure enough, a nice little fire had started in the hay. Mark made two or three rolls over and accidentally went out of the door, falling on the rocks below, a drop of ten or twelve feet. The fall sprained his ankle, and he sat there groaning and rubbing the ankle with one hand while he felt for his boil with the other. Meanwhile, the boys in the loft were busily rolling up the burning hay. They rolled it out of the same door Mark had fallen out of, and down on top of him. I shall never forget the ludicrous sight Mark and the burning hay presented. Away he went down the slope on all fours with the hay on his back, reminding me of a time when I saw some boys put a live coal on a turtle's back in order to see him run. Several of us stood in the door and screamed with laughter. In a few minutes the hay fell off Mark's back and nothing was left but smoking fragments. He turned to us with language unfit for publication. We went to him and tried to console him. We helped him to the barn, almost choked by our efforts to restrain our laughter. One of our boys had

gone to sleep with a lighted pipe in his mouth and set the hay afire.

Early in the morning we advanced in full force upon the house. Colonel Bill Splawn's home was always open to the Rebels. His wife and family took great pleasure in supplying our many wants, and no doubt all of those men who are still living remember the kind treatment they always received there. After breakfast we related our exploits to Colonel Splawn and then started toward New London, ten miles away.

In the afternoon we reached Nuck Matson's with our hair an inch longer than it was when we left there. Nuck had his own good time making fun of our campaign and safe return without the loss of a man, although our lieutenant had suffered several casualties. He was put to bed and tenderly cared for by Nuck and his kind wife. We disbanded and went in different directions. The last I saw of Clemens he lay groaning, his foot propped up, and the proportions of his wrappings made him look like a baby elephant. Mrs. Matson told me years afterwards that he was laid up there for a long time. They gave him a crutch and kept a little negro boy on picket all the time at the end of the lane, where it connected with the main road a quarter of a mile from the house. Frequently the little negro would be seen running for dear life toward the house—a signal for Sam to grab his crutch and hasten to the bushes in the woods pasture adjoining the house. By the time the negro would yell, "Miss Mary! the Yanks is comin!" Sam would be in his hiding place, there to remain until notified, "Marse Sam, de Yanks is done gone!" I never learned what became of "Paint Brush." When Sam



left Mrs. Matson's home he went to Keokuk, and then to Nevada with his brother. As a result of that trip he wrote his first book, *Roughing It*.

After I left Matson's I went to see my sweetheart, Lucy Glascock. Later I went to Paris, Missouri, where I joined the Paris men under Captain Theodore Brace and we went west. After our demobilization at Matson's, Sam Bowen, our sergeant, was arrested by Federals and confined in the stockade at Hannibal, where he learned the trade of wood-sawing. His two bosses stood one on each side of him and every time he looked up to see if they were on hand he looked into the barrel of a musket with a soldier on the far end. He said that was the only thing that induced him to learn the trade. After he graduated as a wood-sawyer he went back to St. Louis, took the oath of allegiance to the United States, and went back to piloting again. After I became the Confederate mail-carrier, Sam Bowen and his sister, Miss Amanda Bowen, were untiring in their efforts to aid the Southern cause. He was pilot on the steamer *G. W. Graham*, a regular packet in the St. Louis and Memphis trade. His brother, Bart Bowen, was captain of the *Graham*. He was of untold assistance to the South in carrying the mail for the Rebel army between St. Louis and Memphis. After the war he was pilot on the *Von Phul* and invited me and my bride to take a trip to New Orleans on her, which we did. We returned to St. Louis the day President Lincoln died.

Sam Bowen died years afterward of yellow fever, while he was a pilot on the *Molly Moore*, and was buried on the river bank. The bank gradually washed away and caved in until his coffin was exposed to the

view of passing steamers. I later heard that when this fact was stated to Mark Twain, during one of his trips from New Orleans to St. Louis, he requested the Pilots' Association to have the remains removed to a place of safety and decently interred. The expense was defrayed by Mark Twain.



## CHAPTER II.

### WAR AND SOCIETY IN WESTERN MISSOURI

THE company I joined at Paris was under Captain Theodore Brace, who was afterwards judge of the Supreme Court of Missouri. Soon after the formation of Brace's company the forces of Generals Porter and Green came down from the northern part of Missouri and we joined them at Shelbina. There we engaged in our first battle, in which several of our company were very badly wounded while we were tearing up the tracks of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad. The Federal troops were in box cars, which were run out on the tracks on which we were working. They were so far from us that we had no idea they were shooting at us until our boys began falling. In our shotguns we used bullets that had been moulded in sewing thimbles. While the lead was hot a sharp-pointed stick had been thrust into it. This gave the bullet the form of a minie ball which just fitted our guns and we could shoot through a box car three hundred yards away. We killed four Federals and wounded several in that battle. Then we went into camp for a few days.

The one Sunday we were in that camp the people of the vicinity assembled and we heard a splendid sermon delivered by Rev. W. H. Cleveland, a Baptist. He weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. About ten days after he preached that sermon he was arrested for preaching to us (thereby giving consola-

tion to Rebels) by troops stationed at Palmyra under General McNeil. Every morning at sunrise and every evening at sunset Preacher Cleveland was made to sit astride a cannon while the salute was being fired. This cruelty was practiced for two weeks. When the command left Palmyra and new troops took its place the new men were not informed of the part Preacher Cleveland took in firing the salute. As was his custom he went out and straddled the gun about the time it was to be fired. The new artillerymen thought he was crazy and knocked him off the gun, saying: "You old fool! Do you want to be killed?"

After several days our command, numbering now several thousand men, started west. We reached the Missouri River at Glasgow. We had been there one day when we saw a steamboat going down the river. Porter and Green had three pieces of artillery which were planted on the levee at Glasgow, and these were used to bring the steamer into port. It proved to be the *Sunshine*, with Captain Willard in command—the last boat I had piloted on the Mississippi before I joined the army. On the boat were two Federal officers and twelve soldiers. I pulled down the Stars and Stripes from the jackstaff and hoisted the Confederate flag. Captain Brent, a former first clerk of the Keokuk Packet Company, took Captain Willard's place as master of the *Sunshine*. George Vickers and Jum Reed were the pilots aboard. We used the steamer to ferry our men across the Missouri from Glasgow to the west side. I went across to the west side and that night after the boat had stopped ferrying troops the pilots, Vickers and Reed, deserted and went to St. Louis. About one o'clock at night I was aroused and ordered by Captain Brent to take charge

of the pilot wheel on the *Sunshine*, and ferried troops across the river all the next day until late in the afternoon.

The army then proceeded north by land to Lexington. We stopped the boat overnight at Cambridge, nine miles above Glasgow. During the night Federal troops across the river shot holes through the boat with their rifles. Captain Brent, the engineers, and myself were not long getting our horses off the boat. We took the land route for Lexington, where we joined General Sterling Price. Colonel Mulligan was in charge of the Federal forces, who were all entrenched behind a splendid series of earthworks. The Federal forces occupied a bluff about two hundred and fifty feet high, on which the Lexington Female College was located, and General Harris' command, to which Porter and Green's forces were attached, was between them and the river. Our men removed hundreds of bales of hemp and coils of hemp rope from a warehouse and protected themselves from the Federal bullets by rolling the hemp up the hill before them. While we were on this hillside one of the coils of rope was knocked from the pile and went rolling down the hill. I dodged it, but Captain Brace, who was just behind me, undertook to stop it. It was going down hill as a "grounder," when it struck a little ridge, bounced up and struck the Captain in the face, and he and the rope went down the hill together.

On the third day of the siege Colonel Mulligan surrendered to General Price, giving him possession of a large quantity of ammunition, cannon, wagons, and horses. Mulligan's command was paroled at once, and later the commander himself was paroled.



Between the Federal breastworks and the brow of the hill was a plot of ground about a hundred yards in width. On this spot the Federals had a temporary camp and many covered wagons stood about it. During the first night of the siege our boys decided to raid the wagons. The Feds had corralled their horses with about two hundred feet of leather rope. We took the rope and stretched it along the brow of the hill, taking a turn around each tree about two feet above the ground with the idea that if they rushed down the hill to attack us during the night they would trip over the rope. After I had made one trip to the wagons and found nothing I valued I noticed one wagon standing near the trenches. I placed my double-barrel shotgun beside a tree and went to see what was in the wagon. I found a couple of new halters, a coat, and six plugs of tobacco, for which I had no use. While climbing out of the wagon my foot slipped from the double-tree and I fell, making a lot of noise. A large hog, weighing probably three hundred pounds, jumped up and ran from under the wagon, giving vent to its fright in a series of loud grunts. My hair stood on end and my eyes bulged out, as I was sure the Feds would catch me. I started down the hill at my best speed, bearing the leather rope in mind. Making a high jump at what I thought was the place where the rope was stretched I landed straddle of it and away I rolled down the hill. I struck my gun and broke it off square at the stock. I have never seen the hog or the halters from that day to this. I was the laughing stock of the company for several days after this hustling event.

During our two weeks' stay in the vicinity of Lexington the army ate up nearly all the food in the

country. When we started west and south forage was very scarce and we ate boiled beef without salt. Our flour and meal soon vanished and we found the corn growing in the fields too hard for boiling. We stopped at a tin shop in Johnstown and secured several hundred sheets of tin in which we punched holes with nails, making graters of the tin. We grated the corn, mixed it with a little water, and baked it. This was our diet for nearly a week.

After we left Lexington our horses became afflicted with a contagious disease called "grease heel" and hundreds of our men had to walk and lead their crippled animals. This created a straggling caravan many miles in length. Jimmie Hayes, who belonged to my mess in Brace's company, always rode with me. Our horses were both afflicted with the grease heel. We had walked one day from early morning until nine o'clock at night without food for ourselves or the horses. We stopped on the edge of a prairie to sleep for the night. Soon after we lay down Jim said: "Ab, I hear music; it is a brass band." I told him he imagined it, but he insisted, so I raised up on one elbow to listen. Sure enough, I heard it. On looking intently to the west about a mile away I saw a light. We got up and led our horses toward it and found a house in which was General Slack's headquarters band on its way to join our army.

The band boys gave us something to eat. While we were conversing with them an old farmer, blustering and about two-thirds drunk, walked in. He said: "Where did you fellows come from? Have you seen my nigger Jim?"

Some of the boys asked who he was. "I'm John

Jacob Asbury. My horse got loose and my nigger ought to be coming after me with a carriage."

We thought the old man was crazy. In a few minutes he dropped down in a corner and went to sleep. Shortly afterwards a big negro came in and asked: "Is you seed anything of Marse John?" His question roused Marse John, who arose and cursed him for his delay. He meekly answered that he had started as soon as the horse came home. The old man asked if we had plenty to eat, and we told him that we were almost starved. He said he lived two miles from there and that he would send us a good breakfast. Outside the door was a fine carriage drawn by two splendid, matched horses. Marse John got in and away they went. To our great surprise, next morning by sunrise Jim arrived with a spring-wagon loaded with well-cooked food. You may be sure we appreciated Marse John Jacob Asbury's hospitality.

The night before we caught up with our army we arrived at the town of Lawrence about dark and remained there overnight. There were two young ladies in the house where we stopped. After supper they invited us to go to a party given for the benefit of their church at the residence of one of their members. If there was anything omitted from that party that might have been of financial benefit to their church I am unaware of what it was. All kinds of plays were indulged in. I still believe that some of them were invented for the especial benefit of Jimmie Hayes and myself.

One game was called "An introduction to the king and queen." The boys were consigned to one room and the girls to another. In the girls' room were three high-backed chairs placed close together in a

row, the middle chair facing in the opposite direction from the two end ones. A large sheet was thrown over the three. The boys were invited in one at a time. The king sat on one end chair and the queen on the other. A girl was kneeling in the middle chair but she appeared to be standing behind it. The space between the two end chairs had two thin strips of wood placed across under the sheet to hold it in place. When the boys, in turn, were ushered into the room, each knelt before the queen and kissed her hand. If she arose and extended both hands to him he was thus elected as next king. He gave the queen the most choice, soul-stirring kiss he had in stock and then took his seat upon the center of the throne between the king and queen.

Fortunately for me, when my turn came I was not "It" and felt quite disappointed that I did not get an opportunity to kiss the handsome queen. Jimmie came next as candidate for royal honors. Well, he got them with a vengeance! The handsome queen arose and extended both hands to Jim so cordially and sweetly and then the kiss they indulged in was sufficient to cause a long sigh from the covetous male onlookers. With one hand she waved him to a seat beside her. What happened? Jim inherited more trouble in the next ten seconds than he could dispose of in six hours. Between the two chairs and underneath the sheet that formed the throne was a tub full of water and when Jim took the coveted seat beside the queen the two thin slats broke and he sat down in the tub, all doubled up. It is unnecessary for me to say that he got wet amidships from his knees to his arms. Of course the audience laughed at him. Poor Jimmie was all "in" and he had to leave his

new-won queen and go to our lodging place to borrow a wringer. Two other young men were royally crowned with the same liquid results that attended Jim.

As the party progressed the boys were again stored in one room and ushered one at a time into the girls' room. I presume there were thirty girls present, some of them very handsome and talented. In this play one acted as master of ceremonies. Three or four of the boys went in ahead of me and after they had been in a few minutes a great amount of laughter was heard. Finally it came my turn, for which I had waited very impatiently, as I knew that every play undoubtedly afforded a chance to kiss some of those pretty, innocent country girls, who were apparently enjoying the kissing bee as much as we were, and pocketing money for their church at the same time.

I went into the girls' room and a large tin funnel was placed in the waistband of my trousers. Vests were not worn by our soldiers. The young lady officiating as leader informed me that I was to hold my head back as far as possible and the girls, in turn, would place a ring on my forehead and let it roll down my face. If I could make the ring go into the funnel I could kiss the girl who owned the ring. If I failed, I had to pay ten cents for each failure, the money to go to the church treasury. They had placed a piece of paper in the tube of the funnel to prevent the ring from going through. While these preliminaries were being arranged I was impatience personified, as I anticipated kissing several of those pretty girls. I was quite certain I could catch a ring every time it was placed upon my forehead.



I missed the first one and had to pay ten cents. The second one I caught, and you may bet I was much quicker settling that debt than the previous one. Now for the third encounter. One of the prettiest brunettes in the whole company stepped up to me and said persuasively, "Mr. Grimes, if you catch my ring you will not be so rude as to demand a kiss, will you?"

I answered, "Why, Miss, I do not think it would be possible for me to sacrifice such an extreme pleasure as the prize presented and in sight would certainly afford."

She blushing stepped to my side and said, "I guess I must take my chance like the other girls." With one hand on my head—which she pushed so far back I could see nothing but the ceiling—she placed the ring on my forehead. Oh, shades of Beelzebub! Was I dreaming? or was I awake? It required but an instant to realize that I was very much awake. My eyes rolled toward the ceiling and my eyelids fluttered faster than the wings of a humming bird as the cold water coursed down the inside of my pant-legs and underclothing. The breath seemed instantly to leave my lungs and I strove hurriedly to catch it—which I succeeded in doing after several moments. Then I was apprised of what had happened to me. While my head was pushed back one of those sweet, gentle girls whom I admired so highly poured a half-gallon dipper of cold water into that funnel. The little scrap of paper used to stop rings was not intended to stop water, neither did it do so. There was but one place for the water to go and it went there without delay.

Can you imagine my unpleasant predicament on that momentous occasion? I stood shivering, with



the water running out of the bottom of my pant-legs to the floor, while the boys and girls were holding their sides. I made a great effort and finally bore my damp linen to our lodging house and borrowed the wringer of which Jimmie had so recently stood in need. When I enlightened him as to the production that had been especially provided for my initiation into the society of Lawrence, hysterics came near ending his mortal career. When he recovered his speech he said he would be willing to be recrowned king if he could see me paying my penalty.

The following night we caught up with our branch of the army encamped in Saint Clair County, near Sauk River. During the autumn the army was re-organized from state militia to the Confederate army. I joined Colonel Elijah Gates' First Missouri Cavalry, Company K, under Captain Rogers.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PRISON LIFE AT SPRINGFIELD AND ST. LOUIS

WHILE we were encamped on a large fruit farm owned by a man named Smith, near Osceola, St. Clair County, six of our company (Frank Pitts, Jim Hayes, John and Charley Hanger, Abe Edwards, and myself) were detailed as picket guards on the Warsaw road. We left camp at noon and located about ten miles from the main army in a very large prairie, where we could see for miles in every direction. We protected ourselves from the cold October wind by lounging in a ravine that had been washed by rains and time. About daylight we became chilled and, contrary to orders, we built a little fire in the ravine. An hour or so later we discovered three men on horse-back approaching from the north. Their number being so small, we paid but little heed, as such parties of Secesh frequently could be seen riding about. When they were within four or five hundred yards of us they attracted our attention by halting. One man got off a big mule and turned him around with his tail toward us. We saw that the mule was hitched to something. We did not know what it was, but in a moment we thought the mule had exploded. There was a puff of smoke, a whizzing sound, then the loud report of a gun and a bouncing shot. About the third time it hit the ground it struck in the midst of our fire, which flew in all directions, and the shell buried itself in the ground fifty yards beyond.

The ends of our hair at once pointed heavenward and as we gathered ourselves together we saw them apparently loading up that mule again. Before we could mount, another shell struck in our midst, but did no damage. We started full tilt after those Yankees and they raced up the road firing their carbines at us. We soon overtook the man on the mule, who stopped and displayed a white handkerchief, and we were so elated over capturing him that we permitted the other men to ride away from us. That gun was a mountain howitzer and carried a small shell weighing about two pounds. The Yankee had ten more shells in a kind of pocket of heavy leather hung on the saddle—similar to pistol holsters.

We rode immediately to headquarters with our capture and were congratulated by "Pap" Price and considered ourselves the heroes of the army. We had had nothing to eat since the previous morning, and I felt as if it would require the aid of a case knife to separate the inner linings of my stomach. Each man went to the tent of his own mess. My messmates said they had not had a thing to eat except some boiled cabbage that was in a large camp kettle near by. The emptiness of my stomach seemed to increase, as I disliked cabbage. However, I procured a pan and an iron spoon and dished out some of the cabbage. Never in all my life had I eaten anything that tasted so good, and since that day I have not ungratefully passed by a dish of cabbage. The Yank that manipulated that bay mule was paroled and given an old plug horse to get back to his camp. We six heroes bade him a friendly good-bye.

One day a man who was spying about our camp was captured. He was sentenced to be shot, and a squad

of our men took him outside our camp. I did not care to witness the shooting of an unarmed and helpless man, so I remained in camp to launder one of my two red flannel shirts I had purchased in Lexington. It is needless to remark that the shirt needed renovating. I took our camp kettle, filled it with water, placed the shirt in it, and laid a rock on top of the shirt to keep it under the water so no part of it could boil over the top of the kettle and get into the fire. I built a fire under the kettle, took my gun, and strolled out in the direction the men had gone with the spy.

About a mile from camp I sat down on top of a rail fence with the butt of the gun resting on a lower rail. The rail on which I sat broke in two and the gun hammer struck a lower rail and discharged the gun. The load went right through the brim of my hat, which was on my head at the time! This circumstance eliminated all interest in the shooting of the spy, and I returned to camp to look after my red flannel shirt.

When I reached camp I found Frank Pitts, Charley Holtzclaw and his brother Frank, and one or two others standing about the fire and boiling kettle. One of them took a stick, stuck it into the kettle, and to my astonishment resurrected a large ham. I yelled, "What did you fellows do with my shirt?" "What shirt?" came from two of them. I quickly informed that foraging squad that my shirt had been left in that kettle. They jerked the kettle from the fire and emptied the contents on the ground, disclosing the reddest ham and the greasiest piece of wearing apparel ever exhibited to the gaze of any human being.

After half an hour's consultation and elaborate cussing it was decided that the flavor and coloring of the ham would not be appreciated if it were re-

placed in the kettle and fully prepared for consumption, so it was carried off and ditched. With my shirt I was loath to part. I put a lot of ashes into the kettle with the shirt and boiled it the rest of the day, changing the water frequently. That shirt never recovered from its contact with the ham. It was several sizes smaller and somewhat short. I often heard from my comrades regarding the loss of the ham, but received little sympathy over the loss of my shirt.

In November, 1861, while we were in camp on Sauk River, one of our company, Hawkins, was quite sick and we obtained permission to take him to a small farmhouse close by. We waited on him for about a week and then he died. We made a rough pine box for a coffin and that night five of our men went to the house to sit up with the corpse. The little frame house had two rooms in front and a hall between. Among the watch party were Dave Young, a sort of wag and butt of all jokes, the same man who had shot his horse when we were camped on Salt River, and a man named Henderson, who bore a strong resemblance to Hawkins, the corpse. Henderson had long black whiskers and black hair and smoked a cob pipe incessantly, as Hawkins had done.

About one o'clock in the morning Young tilted his chair back against the wall at the fireplace and went to sleep. We concluded it would be a splendid opportunity to shake off our drowsiness and to have some fun with Young, so we took the corpse out of the coffin and laid it upon a bench out in the hall. We then stood the coffin up on end close by the only door into the room—the one leading into the hall. There were two windows on the front side of the room; one was near the door and the other near the fireplace



where Young sat asleep. The sheet which had been wrapped around the corpse we wrapped around Henderson, covering him to his neck, as the corpse had been wrapped, leaving only the face exposed. In his mouth we placed a cob pipe, which he smoked in long whiffs. All our party then went outside the house, leaving Young tilted against the wall sound asleep. We made a noise outside to rouse Young. He awoke and saw the corpse, as he thought, immediately in front of him on the opposite side of the room. He jumped up, rubbed his eyes first with one hand, then with the other, and stood with his mouth wide open watching the corpse standing up in the coffin, with the winding sheet covering all but his face, and smoking like a chimney. Young glanced hastily about the room and said hoarsely, "Boys, are you all gone?" "Yes, Dave," drawled the corpse, "they are all gone, but I will stay with you!" Dave screamed, "I will be damned if you are going to stay with me!" Out through the window he went. The window was partly raised and he took the sash and glass out with him as he fell full length on the ground outside, about six feet below the window. He sprang to his feet and started for camp, touching only the high places. We yelled at him, but he never heard us, and when he reached camp he fell exhausted. We went back into the house and rearranged our corpse, and there was no more drowsiness that night among our watch party.

After quite a long sojourn in St. Clair County, where the Missouri Confederate militia was reorganized into the Confederate army, I joined Company K, First Missouri Cavalry, under Colonel Elijah Gates, whom I considered a noble, brave man.



After being well organized and drilled we moved to the south and west, finally landing near Springfield, about December 23, 1861. During all this time we were not near the enemy and nothing of note or interest occurred, except that the food was very scarce and if we chanced to get two meals (which usually consisted of coarse corn meal and boiled beef) on the same day we all made a note of it. Once in a while a few dried apples or peaches were brought into camp. Coffee was the only thing that changed frequently, and our supply of this depended entirely upon the vicinity in which we chanced to be located. The different blends were parched rye, rye and wheat, rye and dried apples, rye and barley, corn, corn and rye, corn and dried apples, or peaches and sweet potatoes. The latter blend was most popular. There was plenty of game in southwestern Missouri and we frequently enjoyed rabbits, squirrels, and quail. In sparsely settled districts a skinned hog often graced our campfire and fresh pork greeted our stomachs. I was the best corn-bread baker in our company, but I often had a good deal of discussion and delay about getting the wash pan to mix the bread in, as boys are notoriously slow about washing up and that pan was the only cooking utensil available.

I was detailed in charge of twelve men to go to the mills in the vicinity and procure food for the regiment. While at one of the mills I was notified to hurry back to camp. Before we reached Springfield we were told that our outfit had retreated south with the intention of intercepting General Price's division. I sent the wagons and men on ahead, but my partner, Mr. Hurst, and myself were delayed. We

stayed all night in a farmhouse which stood near the main road leading from Springfield to Cassville. Next morning we started out early to join our company, which was then about twenty-five miles south of Springfield. When we reached the main road we found several horses tied to a fence around a big house. Supposing they belonged to some of our own outfit we dismounted and entered the house, hoping to obtain some breakfast. To our dismay the room was filled with Federal soldiers, and as we wore gray uniforms and carried guns our identity was evident and we were made prisoners.

Guards escorted us down the road to Curtis' and Sigel's commands. My horse, a splendid animal and a great pet, which I had brought from home, was taken from me and I was placed in the infantry. We marched until night, and next morning we were sent to Springfield with ten other prisoners. We were placed in a temporary prison, an old two-story frame building about twenty-four feet wide and two hundred feet long. It was a double building under one roof. The half adjoining the prison section was vacant and its yard was under separate fence. In the prison section the lower room was occupied by guards as a Federal barracks. The upper room was used to confine the Rebel prisoners, about forty in number. The guards were lax and paid but little attention to the prisoners.

After we had been in this place a couple of days Hurst and I decided we would vacate our quarters. Two Federal soldiers had been placed in our room because of drunkenness. While they lay on the floor asleep I took from one his cap and overcoat. At the foot of the stairway in the lower room I picked up a

gun belonging to a guard who was off duty. We sent two of our men out for food and water, and as they were accompanied by the two guards who were posted at our door we were left unguarded. Equipped with the cap, gun, and overcoat, I acted as guard and Hurst walked out in front of me. When the guard downstairs halted us I told him I was going to take Hurst into the yard. He mistook me for an extra guard and permitted us to pass out.

We visited two young ladies named Logan, who lived in the outskirts of Springfield. Someone knocked at the door and the girls hurried us into a rear room and then opened the front door. One of the girls came to us much excited and said a couple of Federal officers had come to call on them. We required no advice from the girls as to the necessity for our departure. When we went out the side gate we found two fine horses tied to the fence. There was a pair of holster revolvers hanging to the pommel of each saddle—all ready for us. We were rejoiced at this discovery, and, mounting the horses, we started south to join our command. We traveled most of the night, finally camping in a stable loft near the roadside. Next morning we took to the by-roads for safety. Near the Arkansas line we learned from returning Confederates that our army was returning north to give battle to the Federals. We were delighted with this information, as we thought we would not have to travel far before meeting the Missouri troops. Before we found them the battle of Pea Ridge had begun. We found our command and took part in the skirmish. In the last hours of the fight I was knocked senseless by the butt of a carbine in the hands of a Federal soldier. When I regained consciousness sev-

eral hours later I was propped up against a tree and a Federal was bathing my brow with water from his canteen. With about one hundred other prisoners we were returned to the Springfield prison from which we had escaped. I concluded I would not try to escape again or to go through the enemy's country alone, but would wait until all the Rebel prisoners were shipped to St. Louis by train. I thought I might escape from prison in St. Louis and rejoin my command much more easily than to travel through the southeastern part of Missouri, which was infested by Federals and unsafe for Rebels.

On my return to the Springfield prison I put my wits to work to devise some way to promote a "grapevine route." In the room we occupied there was a long counter reaching from one end of the storeroom to within six feet of the other end. The counter had been moved out a bit and a temporary platform built to connect it with the wall, thus forming a bed seven feet wide and ninety feet long. On this the prisoners slept. The building next door was separated from our section by a wall of four-inch studding and two layers of lath and plaster. One day I crawled back under this platform-bed and cut a hole through the plaster wall, and went down the stairs of the empty building, which was under the same roof as the prison section. I took possession of the key to the rear door, opening into the yard, and returned to my room. There was an old wooden blind, or shutter, in our room. I placed this over the hole under the bed in such a way as to hide the hole I had cut. I then inquired among our men if any wanted to escape, and was informed that eight or ten wanted to go.

There were no guards in our room, so I took the



men through the hole in the wall without any risk. We went through the vacant building and its yard and the escaped prisoners went on their way rejoicing. That yard was under separate fence and was not patrolled.

Hurst and I visited the Logan girls again and returned to our room with no one the wiser for our outing. There were many new prisoners coming in every day and the guards did not know how many men there should be in our room. When the roll was called someone answered for the escaped ones. The guards had no idea that numbers of their prisoners were escaping nightly through the hole in the wall, until about sixty had been released by my "grape-vine route."

Lieutenant Baker Young, commander of our prison, learned in some way that Hurst and myself had been out in town several times at night and he questioned us about it. We told him we went out whenever we desired, and that we would call on him some night. He urged us to do so.

In the county jail in Springfield was a man named Martin, who was charged with burning a mill and with having been one of a party that had murdered a Union farmer. He had been tried and sentenced to be shot at Savannah, Missouri. As his time was growing short I concluded that I would make a desperate effort to effect his escape. He was a stranger to me, but I felt great pity for him. Procuring one of the guards' guns (which were kept standing against the partition of the stairway from the guards' barracks into our room) and donning my Federal overcoat and cap, I went out through the hole in the wall under the bed and down the steps of the vacant build-

ing. In a store in town I procured ink and paper to write a bogus order to the city jailer instructing him to deliver to bearer the prisoner Martin, to be escorted by bearer to Colonel Mills' headquarters in the courthouse, which was just across the public square from the jail.

I presented the forged order to the jailer about seven o'clock that night. I stood outside the door and my Federal overcoat, cap, and gun caused him to think the order was all right. I waited outside until he brought Martin to the door. The jailer asked if I needed help to escort the prisoner. I said: "No, he will walk in front of me and if he makes a false move I will shoot him." The courthouse had a large lobby within its walls, between the front doors and the doors of the courtrooms, a kind of hallway. I marched Martin into this lobby and told him to go out the side door to the alley. I marched him out to the edge of the city, where I ordered him to halt and handing him the gun told him to flee for his life. He dropped on his knees and with tears streaming from his eyes thanked me for the great risk I had taken in his behalf. For some unaccountable reason it was a whole day before his escape was discovered and he was never recaptured. I returned to my prison as was my custom.

A few nights later Hurst and myself took a couple of bayonets from the guards' guns as they leaned against the stairway. These we tied to two old brooms that were used to sweep out our room and then departed by our under-the-counter route and kept our promise to call on Lieutenant Young, who lived about five blocks from the prison. He answered our knock on his door and invited us in. He was entertaining



several ladies and gentlemen, to whom he introduced us, and we all had a fine time discussing our war experiences. After spending more than an hour at the lieutenant's home we bade him good-evening and started for the prison. As we were leaving he said: "Look here, Grimes, I have no doubt you will go back to the prison, but I want to see you go through the front door with those fake guns when there is a guard on watch." We answered, "All right," and he accompanied us almost to the front door of the prison, where he stepped to one side out of sight of the guards. Hurst went in first and I followed, with my overcoat thrown around the broom, the bayonet in full sight. The German on guard at the door said: "Damned if those fellows haven't been downtown again!" Next morning all twelve members of the guard were placed under arrest for neglect of duty and were kept in the guardhouse for ten days. Search was made for our exit but it was not discovered.

Not long after this it was decided to send all the Rebel prisoners up to Rolla, in wagons, a distance of one hundred and twenty-five miles, and there put them aboard a train for St. Louis. There were ten men to each of the ten wagons. On the morning of our departure Colonel Mills, commander of the district, Lieutenant Young, and one or two other officers entered our prison room. We were ordered to stand on one side of the room and when our names were called we were to step across the room. Many names were called of men who had departed by the grapevine route. I made some remarks to the effect that the absent man had gone away for his health, or to visit a comrade in the Confederate army. Colonel Mills grew very angry at me and said: "Grimes, you

are the scoundrel who forged my name to an order and took Martin out of jail and turned him loose!" I said: "Colonel, you did not catch him, did you?" "No, sir! and I shall put you in irons for it." A blacksmith was brought in and I was shackled with a short chain about three feet long from one ankle to the other. When the wagons were ready to start I called Lieutenant Young one side and said to him, "Look here, Lieutenant, you know very well that I could have escaped from this prison twenty times had I wanted to do so! Now, I want to go to St. Louis and if you will take these irons off of me I will do my best to see that every one of these prisoners goes to Rolla without escaping en route. If you do not take them off I will get away and take every man I can." After a short consultation Colonel Mills recalled the blacksmith and the irons were removed. The prisoners far outnumbered the guards and we could have made trouble for them but for this promise. The guards paid very little attention to us and all reached Rolla. There we took a train and on arriving at St. Louis we were delivered to the prison authorities for confinement in Gratiot and Myrtle Street prisons.

I was placed in the Myrtle Street prison, formerly Lynch's negro pen, an old slave market. The other prisoners were divided between this and the Gratiot Street prison, formerly the McDowell Medical College, on Eighth and Gratiot streets. I had a good time while in the negro pen as a large number of my friends, ladies and gentlemen, called on me. They brought me many presents of food, clothing, and money. I was supported all during the war by contributions of friends for whom I carried letters, both Union and Confederate people.

Among other prisoners who received much attention was Captain Hampton Boone, a very handsome young man and a great favorite with the ladies. One day some of his lady friends brought in a suit of feminine attire, and dressed Boone in it, to attempt an escape. He refused to take off his cavalry boots and don the slippers they had provided for him. He thought the boots would be of value to him if he succeeded in escaping. At the outside door a guard stood on either side of the three steps leading to the street. As Boone passed out with a lady on either side of him the wind blew his dress to one side and exposed his boots to the gaze of the guard. After Boone had walked a few steps the guard started after him and Boone ran down Broadway. When he started running he began tearing the dress off with both hands. He tore off the outside skirt, but a big, old-fashioned hoop skirt, then the height of fashion, was like a birdcage and he could not tear it off. As he sprang from the street to the pavement one foot went through the hoop skirt and he turned a double somersault upon the pavement, one guard falling over him. This ended his exhibition of speed. It was in the afternoon and the streets were filled with people. Everyone laughed, including Boone. He came back swinging his poke bonnet by the strings, a guard on each side of him.

On March 30 about thirty prisoners from the negro pen and two hundred from Gratiot were sent to the levee and put on board the *Alton*, destined for the penitentiary at Alton, Illinois, which was then in use as a military prison. A company of Federal soldiers escorted the prisoners from the prison to the boat. While we were waiting on the levee for orders to

board the boat several of my old steamboat friends came to me to shake hands and greet me. Their notice of me attracted the attention of one of the Federal sergeants, a German.

We were all placed on the lower deck of the *Alton* with about ten guards. When the boat started out I held a consultation with Brigadier General Stone, one of the prisoners, and we decided that we would capture those ten guards, take possession of the steamer, and run her south. We did not know whether the ten guards surrounding us were the only Federal soldiers on the steamer, so I deemed it best to investigate. In order to do this I asked Lieutenant Griscom, who was in charge of the guards and who had been a steamboat friend of mine before the war, if he would permit me to go to the pilot house to visit my old friend, Jim Montgomery, the pilot of the *Alton*. I intended to remain up there but a few moments. He escorted me to the pilot house and, stating that his duties called him below, asked me to remain there until he came for me. I gave him my word of honor that I would. He did not return until the boat was within three miles of Alton, and meanwhile I impatiently remained in the pilot house. In the short time that remained it was impossible for me to perfect plans to capture the boat, so the scheme had to be abandoned. Just before we reached Alton we passed the steamer *Henry Clay*.

When we reached Alton the prisoners were marched ashore. Before they started off the boat I concealed myself on the foot-box, beside one of the assistant engineers, who was a friend of mine. All the men passed off the boat except the German sergeant who had noticed me on the levee in St. Louis.

When he saw me on the foot-box he ordered me to come down, demanding, "What are you doing here after all the other prisoners have gone off the boat?" I said, "I have nothing to do with those men." "Yes, you have," he replied; "you are a prisoner! I saw you on the bank at St. Louis. Get down and come on!" I stepped down and we walked to the outside rail of the boat. The *Henry Clay* had just passed the *Alton* and as she came around the stern she cast a big headlight, which she used as a searchlight, in our direction. The sergeant saw the light but did not see the boat. "That boat is on fire," I said, and he hastened to the guard-rail and leaned over it to look at the boat. He lost his balance and went overboard head first, falling directly under the outside wheel of the *Alton*, which was still working, and that was the last of his earthly career.

Shortly afterward the engineer, Mr. Lovett, came to me and said: "Ab, one of the negro firemen saw that little trick you played on that sergeant. Now you better look out, as they always send guards back to search the boat to see if any of the prisoners have been overlooked." I told him I would keep an eye on them, and handed him a five-dollar gold piece, telling him to give it to the fireman and tell him to keep his mouth shut. I saw the soldiers returning to search the boat, and pulling off my coat, I rolled up my sleeves, grabbed an oil can in one hand and a wrench in the other, smeared my face and hands with grease, and began to oil the "doctor" (a pumping-engine for the boiler). While I was tightening up the bolts and oiling the doctor the guards came near me. I asked what they were hunting and they said they were looking to see if any prisoners had been left on



board. I remarked earnestly, "I guess you got them all." They found no one and went ashore. The engineer told me long afterward that when he gave the negro fireman the gold piece he said, "That is all right, Boss; the soldiers don't belong to me."

By this time it was quite dark and I went up to the Texas (the sleeping quarters of the boat's officers) and went to sleep in one of the staterooms. Soon after daylight the *Hannibal City* came down the river and landed just above the *Alton*, which was still lying at the wharf. I stuffed my coat into the seat of my pants, took a couple of old letters in my hand, and ran down the gangplank. I asked them if I had time to get these letters on that boat. They said, "Yes, if you hurry." And I hurried, be assured. I boarded the *Hannibal City*, went up to the pilot house, where I had a big time with my old chum, Arthur Matson (pilot of the *Hannibal City*), and thus I returned safely to St. Louis, having been gone about sixteen hours.

While the *Hannibal City* was lying at the wharf at St. Louis I had breakfast with its captain and I told him I had been paroled and was returning to St. Louis. Unknown to me, two detectives overheard the conversation and they called at the office of the provost marshal and told him of my statement. He told them it was untrue and for them to bring me to him. After I left the boat I met Mrs. Welsh and told her of my escape from the guard, over which we had a hearty laugh. She said she was on her way to Colonel Leighton's office to get a permit to take some clothing to some rebel prisoners in Gratiot. A few hours later I met her again and she told me she had been in Leighton's office and had heard the detectives make the



above report about me. I was informed later that Colonel Leighton was to be married that night at the Trinity Episcopal Church, which stood at the northwest corner of Eleventh Street and Washington Avenue, to Miss Jennie Beach. Out of pure deviltry I proposed to attend the ceremony. To this some of my friends seriously objected, while others said I would not dare do such a risky thing, when all the government officers and the police were on the alert to capture me. A dare or a challenge was a thing I never dodged, so I determined to undertake it. My dear friend, Miss Lizzie Pickering, proposed to accompany me and we were present when the ceremony was performed. We occupied seats near the rear of the church and left promptly after the ceremony. A few days later I wrote Colonel and Mrs. Leighton a note of congratulation, and he had the note published in the *St. Louis Globe* under the title, "Insolent Nerve."

## CHAPTER IV.

### EARLY EXPERIENCES CARRYING THE MAIL

ABOUT this time I conceived the idea of gathering up all the letters I could and carrying them south to the Missouri boys in the army. With this in view I enlisted the aid of Mrs. Marion Wall Vail, Mrs. Deborah Wilson, Mrs. Lizzie Ivers, and Miss Lou Venable. They were to get all the letters they could while I went to the towns of Louisiana and Hannibal to gather letters and to visit my sweetheart and my mother, who lived near New London.

I left St. Louis on April 6, 1862, and went by rail to Centralia, Illinois, then via Cairo and Memphis and reached Rienzi, Mississippi, about April 12, a few days after the Missouri regiments arrived there from Arkansas. The Rebel soldiers were about the happiest set of men in America when I delivered the letters, the first they had received since they had left their homes many months previous. In expressing their joy they said it was like having an angel drop down from heaven with glad tidings—only the wings were missing. I was more overjoyed than anyone else, feeling that I had brought so much happiness to the men, and I determined to delight them again.

I remained in camp two or three days and every log, stump, box, keg, and other available place was used as a writing desk. That entire camp looked as if a cyclone had passed through after the boys' efforts to find writing materials. I received permission from Colonel Elijah Gates to return north with the letters

and bring down another mail. On the morning of April 15 all was in readiness and I bade them good-bye with a promise to return within twenty days unless I procured gratuitous accommodations at some government "Inn." My arm felt paralyzed to the elbow after shaking so many hands. Amid the cheers of our men I was launched in a livery rig and headed for the railroad at Holly Springs, Mississippi.

I did not consider it conducive to my best interests to go via Corinth, as General Halleck and his whole army were sojourning in that vicinity. I took a train at Holly Springs and arrived safely in St. Louis on April 21. That was my first round trip with the mail. I required two or three days to get my lady assistants out with the mail, as much sorting and changing of envelopes had to be done. The ladies went in various directions to different towns and gave the letters to trustworthy persons for delivery to the addressees. After the ladies had delivered the letters it was arranged that the friends of the soldiers throughout Missouri should address their answers to various persons in St. Louis and the ladies were to gather them up and have them ready when I returned. They were to continue their trips throughout the state. In order to facilitate the work they arranged with some corset and hosiery houses to act as drummers for them so that if they were questioned by the Federal authorities they could refer them to the business houses. On several occasions during their career as "grapevine" emissaries they were questioned by officers, who telegraphed to the St. Louis firms for verification of their business transactions.

The ladies collected a large number of letters for me and I left St. Louis May 1 on my way south. I

wanted to do some private investigating of the Union forces so I could make an important report when I reached headquarters. I decided to travel down the Mississippi River in an attempt to make Fort Pillow, which was then in Rebel territory, as was Island No. 10, whose garrison the Federal gunboats were endeavoring to annihilate. The Rebs strongly objected to the Feds navigating the river below that point but, Yankee-like, the Feds conceived the idea of cutting a wide swath through heavy timber, now submerged, across a point that would enable them to pass Island No. 10 unmolested. The river was at flood stage and the water was eight to ten feet deep all over the bottom lands.

To return to my trip south. I left St. Louis on the steamer *Far West*, Captain William Blake, an old friend of mine. At Nealy's Landing, sixty miles below St. Louis, I left the boat and made my way to the home of John Gramer, a retired steamboat pilot. There I obtained a skiff and three or four days' rations and pulled out for Dixie—as I thought at that time. When near Cairo I landed and cut willow branches and placed them over the top of my boat in order to prevent the garrison at Cairo from firing on me. I planned to float down close to the west bank, across the river from the fort, but the current carried me far out into the stream and I dared not use my oars. When I was almost past the fort the soldiers must have suspected that the willows were something other than a floating tree for they began target practice on my boat. Several shots cut the willows and I was quite uneasy as I was in danger of being hit or having the sides of the boat punctured, which would cause it to sink.

When I had floated about four miles below Bird's Point I removed the willow covering and lost no time in getting away from Cairo. The Federal mosquito fleet lay anchored about Island No. 9. This fleet consisted of stern-wheel and other boats remodeled and covered with iron about two inches thick. These boats had been armored under the direction of John Eads, who afterwards built the famous Eads Bridge at St. Louis. There were six or eight boats and many transports. The fleet had four big flatboats about fifty feet long and twenty wide. Each flatboat had an upright portable steam boiler which furnished power to run two saws, one on each forward corner of the boat. There was a long hose connecting the saw with the boiler. The saws were about eight feet long and so arranged that with them the largest trees could be sawed off eight or ten feet below the surface of the water. Then the trunks of the trees were sawed up and dragged out of the way by steam tugs. It was about two and a half miles across the point and those Yankee beavers were only two days cutting the trees out of the way and passing their fleet through to New Madrid, which was below Island No. 10.

This clever trick left the Rebels without anything to guard and interfered with their ration supply, so they spiked their siege guns, abandoned their anticipated Gibraltar, and went south to Fort Pillow. There they found General Pillow peacefully located with quite a large force of Confederates, awaiting any call that might be made by the Feds for permission to pass farther south. After the Rebs evacuated Island No. 10 the heavy gunboats passed on down and anchored above Fort Pillow. The Forked Deer River emptied into the Mississippi above Fort Pillow



and there was another stream connecting with it which in high water afforded an opportunity for light-draught boats to pass around east of the fort and reënter the Mississippi below it, and this was reported to be the aim and object of the energetic Federal commander.

As I had some curiosity to see how the thing would be done I followed the gunboats—a day later—in my skiff. Across the river from the landing at Osceola, Arkansas, I rowed out into the flooded woods to investigate. While there I hid the carpetsack containing the mail in a hollow snag about four feet above the water, intending to return for it after spying upon the fleet. I rowed to a farmhouse that stood on the river bank about two miles above the fleet. The house was built on piling five or six feet above the ground, and had a small porch. Under the house the water was about four feet deep. Late in the afternoon I was seated on the porch when a launch, rowed by six marines, landed. The officer in charge was one Harris, who had been with me on the steamer *Lucy May* on the upper Mississippi. Our recognition was mutual; he greeted me and remarked that he had been told I was in the Rebel army. I told him unblushingly that I had quit the Rebels and had taken the oath of allegiance and was learning the lower river under Captain Tom Taylor, a pilot on the *Wisconsin*, one of the government gunboats. He did not seem to doubt my statement. The party had come for a dressed hog, which was delivered to them by the man of the house and they rowed away.

I felt ill at ease after Harris left, and decided that I would rest until ten o'clock that night and then leave. After supper I retired. Before the hour men-

tioned I was awakened by the approach of a rowboat that landed alongside my skiff at the porch. I had retired with my pants on, fearing my slumbers might be disturbed. I grabbed my hat, coat, shoes, and vest and rolled out of the back window, as I felt certain the new arrivals were there to call on me and I did not feel in a mood to entertain Federal guests. I was satisfied the fall from the window would not fracture any of my bones, as the water was several feet deep and would have a tendency to break the force of the fall. To abandon a nice warm bed for an unnecessary bath in the river was unpleasant, but the case was urgent. Those hardtack consumers were soon uninvited guests in my room. They called the host and I could hear them talking. I was the chief object of their remarks. Finally, the host said: "He must have gone out through this window, as it was closed when he turned in." I had no chance to get into my skiff, as it was tied to the porch beside the launch and some of the men were on guard. The marines got into the launch and rowed all around the house, shooting under it with their revolvers. I was obliged to keep circling around one of the large posts which supported the house to prevent their perforating my hat, which was all of me that was above water. As there was only about a foot of space above water under the house they could not get in with their boat. The lieutenant requested the marines to remove their shoes and socks and take water, which they cheerfully did, shooting in every direction while wading around under the house. As the chance of escape was small, I surrendered. I waded out from under the house and the lieutenant remarked: "Why did you make that kind of a move? You might have

been hit by a shot!" I answered that he had not done much to prevent it. I still had my clothing in my arms, as I had been kept so busy wading around the post to dodge the bullets I had had no time to dress. We all got into the launch. Mate Harris was in charge of it and en route down the river to the fleet we chatted of our good times on the steamer *Lucy May* on the upper Mississippi. He told me that when he reached the gunboat *Benton* with the dressed hog he had told some friends of having seen me and of my statement of being on the *Wisconsin*, not once suspecting that I had not told the truth and with no intention of harming me. Horace Bixby, pilot on the *Benton*, paid strict attention to his remarks and exclaimed, "That notorious devil does not belong to any boat in this fleet and he is here for no good to us." Bixby reported to Admiral Foote, who expressed a desire to cultivate my acquaintance, as he had heard of me, so he detailed a lieutenant to invite me down to the *Benton*. After my capture I was taken aboard the *Benton* (flagship of the fleet), handcuffs and a leg-shackle with ball and chain were placed on me, and I was deposited in the hold to await the morning. I was then presented to Admiral Foote. While I was conversing with him Captain Hudson Downs and his father-in-law, Captain Tom Taylor, and numerous other friends of mine among the officers of the boats of the fleet called on me and I held quite a reception. Next morning I was placed in charge of a Captain Wilson and four marines and sent to Cairo on the steamer *De Soto*. In Cairo I was turned over to Commodore A. N. Pennock, commander of the naval forces at that place. He ordered me searched and a book was taken from my pocket which was

written in cipher, unintelligible to anyone but myself. I refused his request to translate it to him. He remarked that when he had finished with me I would be glad to translate it.

Guards placed me in a blind cell in an old frame building used as a prison. It was about forty by one hundred feet in size and stood some fifty yards south of the St. Charles Hotel. The water within the levee at Cairo was then about three feet deep throughout the city and lacked but an inch of touching the floor of the prison. Next day it covered the floor, and it continued to rise until it was four inches deep on the floor of my cell. There were several other prisoners confined in a large room. Five girls, residents of Cairo, who had been put into a small boat and set adrift down the river, were among the prisoners. Their boat had been blown ashore several miles below the city and the girls walked back to Cairo in defiance of orders they had received to remain away. They were placed in a row of cells next to me. They were a merry gang, dancing and cursing everything in sight, the Yankee army in particular.

The cell I occupied was about five by eight feet in size and contained nothing whatever except a narrow shelf a foot wide built on one side wall. An empty pork barrel was standing in the hall near my door and the sergeant of the guard permitted me to take it into my cell so I could sit on the bench and lean my arms on the barrel. In this position, with my feet in four inches of water, I did my resting and sleeping. The water was cold and so were my feet. My diet was bread and water twice daily for three long weeks. I wore an old-fashioned pair of handcuffs. The wrist portion resembled a pair of plow

clevises with an iron bolt about sixteen inches long running through the eye of the clevis and fastened with an iron wedge, or key, twisted at one end to prevent its removal.

In a few days the water receded and left the floor dry. The floor was constructed of two layers of pine planks, an inch thick, laid crosswise, one layer on top of the other. Before I left St. Louis Mrs. Deborah Wilson had provided me with a spring-backed, one-bladed, flat-handled knife about six inches long. This was sewed inside the lapel of my coat and was overlooked when I was searched by Commodore Pennock. When the water had receded I used this knife to cut a hole through the pine floor, which I covered with the barrel. With a strip of lining torn from my coat tied to a small stick which I had cut off the bench I sounded the water every day. On the third day it was six inches below the bottom of the floor.

I managed to get the key out of my handcuffs by sticking it in a crack in the barrel-head. The girls kept me posted as to the movements of the guard. As the wall between our cells was only an inch thick we could converse with ease. I went through the hole I had cut in the floor and found the water three feet deep on the ground. I had to duck my head under the water at every one of the forty joists under the building until I reached the east end of the prison, which was the only side not boarded up from the ground to the building. It was about nine o'clock at night, dark and raining, though this made no difference to me as I was as wet as water could possibly make me.

Fifteen or twenty steamboats were lying at the wharf at Cairo, loaded with troops and horses and supplies of all kinds in charge of General Buell, who



was en route to Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, to reinforce General Grant, who had recently been defeated in the battle of Shiloh. I waded to the wharf and boarded the steamer *Denmark*, on which I had been a pilot on the upper Mississippi before the war. I saw "Windy Robinson," the captain, standing in the front hallway, and departed in haste, as I knew him to hold strong Union sentiments. I crossed over to the next boat, the *Planet*, a very large freight boat with a big cabin for emigrants instead of the usual passenger cabin. On her middle deck was a large deckroom. Everything was in confusion on these boats and I was unnoticed as I stowed myself away among the plunder to rest and take a nap, as I was completely exhausted by wading through the water after existing three long weeks with but bread and water. I rested quite well and when I awoke the next morning the steamers were en route upstream for Shiloh. There was a regiment of Federal soldiers aboard the *Planet*. I went to the engine room and met Tom Newkirk, chief engineer of the vessel, who was a staunch friend and fellow steamboatman of my father. He was delighted to see me. He provided me with dry clothing and plenty of good food, the first meal I had eaten in three weeks.

I also found on board Sam Anderson, a friend of mine, who was a boat clerk and captain, and with whom I had served before the war. I had befriended him financially when he was in serious trouble and he was now ready to aid me. He said, "Why, hello; where did you come from?" I told him of my escape from the Cairo prison the night before. He said: "The hell you did! I am the government detective on this boat!" I replied: "That is all right, Sam.

Where is your room?" He laughed and we retired to his room and had a long talk. He told me one of the *Planet's* pilots was Joe Janes, a man of southern sympathies, and the other pilot was Henry Eihler, whose politics were undecided. Janes invited me into the pilot house after dark during his watch and while I was up there Captain Eihler entered. I was not personally acquainted with him but we recognized each other.

During my second day on the *Planet* Sam Anderson said to me: "Ab, I was up in the pilot house a while ago and heard the colonel commanding the regiment that is on this boat ask Captain Eihler if he had seen anything of that man, to which the Captain replied that he had not been in the pilot house this morning. The Colonel remarked that he would have to look him up, as he seemed to be in hiding. Now, Ab, you know enough to take care of yourself." I discovered that a guard had been placed at every stairway on the boat except the one leading from the hurricane deck to the pilot house. I went into the upstairs deckroom where soldiers' paraphernalia was piled in confusion and selected a Federal coat, cap, and musket, then I went to one of the guards stationed at a stairway leading from the boiler deck to the main deck near the cook-house and told him the colonel had told me to take that place and for him to guard the stairway to the pilot house. He said: "All right, I am glad enough to get out of this stench." I immediately proceeded to the main deck, which was loaded with hundreds of cattle crowded thick in the boiler deck room. I threw off the Federal coat, laid down the gun, and started through the cattle to the after end of the boat. After some delay and

struggling, during which I was kicked a dozen times by the cattle, I managed to reach the stern of the boat. Near the rudder post was a small hatchway leading to the hold. I thumped the cattle around, raised the hatchway, and climbed down into the hold, which was filled with hay, corn, oats, and all sorts of provender for the cattle, but nothing adapted to my appetite or digestion. Here I remained until the following morning, passing some of the time trying to chew shelled corn, but my teeth were not set right for this task. Finally the boat stopped at Pittsburg Landing.

When I heard the cattle tramping on the deck above me as they were driven off the boat I crawled out of the little hatchway, folded my coat closely and put it into the seat of my pants, tucked the rim of my soft felt hat up on one side of my head, picked up an old piece of hoop, and began helping the roustabouts drive the cattle off the boat. When on the fore-castle I saw an old friend of mine, Charlie King, standing on the stern of the next boat, which was the *Chouteau*. When I spoke to him he told me he was the bar-keeper on the *Chouteau* and for me to hustle over to his boat. I hustled without further entreaty. He fitted me up with clean clothing and a white shirt and I no longer resembled the dirty cow-puncher I had represented shortly before. King procured a pass for me and I wended my way through the Federal lines to the Rebel army at Corinth.

But oh, what a great disappointment the boys had when I told them that I had brought no mail! When I explained to them where and how I had left it; how the lieutenant and six marines had caused my exit through the window into the river, where they en-

joyed target practice in the darkness and gave me three shots to my one; of my arrest and imprisonment in Cairo, my three weeks on bread and water, and my escape through the water, they were loud in their congratulations and delighted that I had returned alive.

I remained at Corinth two or three days gathering up letters, and then returned to Shiloh, where I took the steamer *Sky Lark*, on June 1, 1862. Captain William Blake was in command, the same man I have mentioned as commander of the *Far West*. On approaching Cairo, where the boat was to land and remain a few hours, I was afraid I might be recognized by some of the authorities or guards of the city where I had so recently escaped from prison. In order to secrete myself I went up to the hurricane deck, where there was a lifeboat turned upside down on the deck near the stern of the steamer. I crawled under the lifeboat and stretched out on the under side of the seats, between the seats and the bottom of the boat, which in its inverted position formed the top. There was about four inches of space between the top of the boat and the deck floor and no one could see me without lying down on the deck and peering underneath the boat. While the steamer lay at Cairo I could hear people running back excitedly on the roof of the hurricane deck toward where I was hidden under the lifeboat. My impression was that they were after me and that it was my finish, but they paid no attention to me. I heard them talking about a body that was floating down the river past the stern of the boat. After it had floated out of sight the party dispersed and went below, greatly to my relief. The steamer left the landing soon afterwards

and I crawled out, feeling as if I were broken apart in two or three places at the points where I hung over the seats.

I made the trip through to St. Louis safely, arriving on June 4 with a large mail, which was distributed by my lady assistants, who went in various directions throughout Missouri. I remained in hiding with friends in St. Louis until they returned with their collection of mail, which was about ten days.

In St. Louis I stopped with a family named Loughridge. The family consisted of Mrs. Loughridge, two sons, Bob and John, and a daughter, Miss Lizzie, who was then about nineteen years of age. She and Miss Phœbe Couzens (later a noted reformer and politician) were very intimate friends, despite the fact that Miss Lizzie was a violent Rebel and Miss Phœbe an unrelenting Union girl. The latter lived about half a block distant on Christy Avenue between Eleventh and Twelfth streets. One day when I was lying on the sofa in the parlor I heard someone try to open the front door and then I saw a lady pass the side windows on her way around to the side entrance. I immediately departed by the front door and was not seen again on the premises. The intruding party proved to be Miss Phœbe, who entered without knocking and asked excitedly if Ab Grimes was there. Miss Lizzie answered: "No! What put that into your head?" She said she had heard her father say that Bob Loughridge told someone in King's saloon that I was stopping with them and she had come to see if the statement was true. Had Miss Phœbe gained admittance to that parlor I would surely have changed my lodgings to one of Uncle Sam's hostelries for an indefinite stay.



While I was in St. Louis I made the acquaintance of Robert Loudon, a member of the old Liberty Volunteer Fire Company. That fact alone assured me that I had found a good partner, who had unlimited courage and good judgment for any dangerous work we might undertake. He joined me in the grapevine enterprise. We solemnly swore that if at any time either of us was in trouble or in prison the other would hasten to his relief, no matter where he was located, and would use every endeavor to effect his release. Loudon proved himself possessed of all the good qualities I had attributed to him on first sight. He was so busy later on trying to avoid the clutches of the Feds in his splendid work of carrying dispatches (and amusing himself burning government steamboats) that he never had an opportunity to rescue me, but it was my good fortune to effect his escape on two occasions. When I was ready to go south he had collected a large quantity of valuable medicines and expressed them to Jackson, Tennessee. Miss Lou Venable left two hours in advance with Loudon's mail. We all met in Centralia, Illinois, to which place Mrs. Deborah A. Wilson and Mrs. Marion Wall Vail had brought a supply of mail which had been collected from all over the state by my corps of lady assistants. The three ladies returned from there to St. Louis, while I went on to Louisville to get mail for General Breckenridge's regiment. Misses Sudie Kendall, Belle Shirley, and Johnson, and Mrs. Ferguson and Mrs. Nickols had a large Kentucky mail gathered ready for me and I took it to Priceville, Mississippi, where I arrived on the twenty-fifth of June.

I was escorted into camp at one o'clock in the morn-

ing by one of the outpost picket guards. Notwithstanding the hour I was soon surrounded by an excited, anxious, happy crowd of men and I had to enlist the aid of Captain Eller, Major Senseny, and Jimmie Hayes, whose introduction to the queen at Lawrence, Missouri, I have already described, to assist in distributing the mail. It is needless to say that I had no chance to sleep until late in the afternoon, as the boys were all eager for news from home. During all my career as mail-carrier I never could escape a feeling of genuine sorrow when a soldier came to me and anxiously inquired, "Captain Grimes, have you no letter for me?" and I had to turn him away with the answer, "Very sorry, I have none for you." He usually hunted up some of his comrades from home, hoping they had received letters which told something of his family, and in this he was seldom disappointed.

I had a splendid time in this camp. I seldom ate two meals with the same mess, as my invitations to camp banquets were more numerous than I could accept. I did manage, however, to sleep two nights with my messmates in Company K, Gates' First Missouri Cavalry, and two nights with the Paris boys, with whom I had joined Captain (now Colonel) Brace's company in June, 1861. At this time they belonged to Company I, under Captain Wilson, of Burbrage's regiment. A short time after this visit some disastrous battles were fought and on my later arrivals in camp the answers to my inquiry as to the whereabouts of some comrade would be: "Poor fellow! he was killed at the battle of ——." It is impossible for the reader to conceive of the sorrow such replies caused me. I had letters for many of these noble men

who so patriotically sacrificed their lives. When their names were called to receive them and no one responded the tears would fall from the eyes of many a brave soldier as someone answered, "Too late!" In such cases I delivered the letters to men who had been their neighbors back home with instructions to read them and write to the soldier's family the particulars of his death.

I well remember that it was on this trip that I was appointed by General Sterling Price as official mail-carrier for the Confederate army and was commissioned a major. However, I was never called major, as I was a steamboat pilot and had been known as "Captain Grimes" for years. The appointment was made at General Price's headquarters in the presence of the troops in camp, together with General Henry Little, Colonel Elijah Gates, Colonel Frank M. Cockrell, Colonel Burbage, Colonel Thomas Snead, Chaplain Father Bannon, and some other officers. General Price made a few appropriate remarks as to caution, keeping my own council, dangers, etc., and that I was to be ever mindful not to jeopardize the welfare of the Southern people at home in old Missouri. He shook hands with me and bade me "God speed." Every one of the officers gave me a fervent handshake and a few cheering words. General Little, that noble patriot and brave soldier, who sacrificed his life for the Southern cause at Iuka on September 19, dwelt on the splendid work in which I was engaged, and said that my arrival in camp with the letters bringing the soldiers glad tidings from their dear ones at home caused them a joy that could be equaled only by a great and decisive victory over the enemy.

Father Bannon, our chaplain, then congratulated me upon my appointment, but added that he did not deem it an appointment in which congratulations could be appreciated because I would be in constant danger of being arrested and hanged as a spy, or of being shot in trying to escape capture. Colonel Cockrell, Colonel Burbrage, and Colonel Polk also gave cheering words of different nature and last came my dear old Colonel Elijah Gates, the bravest of the brave. He said he deemed it one of the highest compliments that could be paid his regiment to have one of its members selected to fill such an important position, one to which the entire army looked with anxiety and fond anticipation as the only source through which they could hear from their dear ones at home.

## CHAPTER V.

### FURTHER OPERATIONS OF THE GRAPEVINE CIRCUIT

THE boys cheered me lustily as I left for Holly Springs, where I took train for St. Louis, arriving there July 2, 1862. By this time conditions were acute for the Southern people in St. Louis. Many had been imprisoned, and I had to change my lodgings several times during my stay. All the grapevine emissaries were kept busy after my arrival, as I brought a large mail. The Union authorities had discovered the fact that a regular mail service between the Rebel army and the Rebels of Missouri existed and they were leaving no stone unturned to demolish the system. Bob Loudon was as busy as I was. His work consisted mainly of carrying dispatches, though he carried a lot of mail as well. The sideline of steamboat burning was accredited to him and he was, therefore, much in demand by the Federals.

I left St. Louis this time on July 12 via Indianapolis, where I was to meet Bob and have a short rest and vacation from our unlawful pastimes and professions, but the rest proved a myth. I had boxed up all my mail in St. Louis and expressed it to a drug house in Louisville, charges prepaid. Bob arrived that evening from Chicago. We stopped at the New England Hotel, which was near a large market house. We shared one room and certainly enjoyed being together and in comparative security from capture



by the Federals. We attended the theater the first night and roamed about town next day reading signs. In our rambles we strayed into a big public hall, upstairs over the market house, that would seat about six hundred persons. After supper we noticed that this hall was lighted up. Our landlord informed us that a draft had been made in Indiana for several thousand men to go into the Federal army and that many had been drafted whose patriotism was insufficient to induce them to go to the front in defense of Old Glory and thereby relinquish their taste for hot rolls, steak, and fine pastry and cultivate a taste for hardtack and black coffee. That sacrifice was not so objectionable as the prospect of using their bodies to stop the Rebel bullets while they tried to uphold the Union flag. The meeting was for the purpose of buying substitutes.

We concluded to go up and watch the procedure. We found the hall filled with men, of whom about seventy-five were seated on the platform. A master of ceremonies informed the audience that these had been drafted to serve in the United States army and were here to purchase substitutes and that they would make bids as at an auction for men who would take their places as soldiers. When the bid was high enough to induce anyone to accept the position he was to signify his willingness by raising his hand, and come forward to the desk on the platform and give his name and address. He would then receive a card bearing an address at which he was to call the next morning, when the deal would be closed and the amount of the bid paid in greenbacks.

Louden and I sat there much interested while the bidding was going on. Several bids from six hundred

and fifty to eight hundred dollars were made and accepted. Presently some patriot bid eight hundred dollars and I was perfectly astounded to hear Louden sing out, "I will take that!" I grasped his coat tail and tried to pull him down to the seat, but he was too strong for me and up he went to the desk to get his card. When he returned I asked him what on earth he meant by making such a rash move. He said: "My pocketbook sides are getting mighty close together and I am needing a little loan from somewhere powerful bad. Can't you catch on?" He said this in such an earnest, pleading tone that I could not refuse, so I gave him my hand and assured him that I would stay with him to the finish, which instantly put a broad smile all over his big, smooth face.

A little later a fellow who considered absence of body better than presence of mind and paramount to the sum of eight hundred and seventy-five dollars bid that sum and I accepted it. I gave the name of "James Ferguson, Zanesville, Ohio," and received a card requesting me to call at the office of Charles Moore, attorney, at ten o'clock next morning. Bob and I were on hand at the appointed time and we found all the other substitutes and a detail of soldiers from the Union army to take charge of the recruits thus obtained. Bob was "Henry Meyers." He was paid the eight hundred dollars and I received eight hundred and seventy-five, all in greenbacks, for which we gave the donors receipts that cleared them from liability to the draft, further than which they did not care one whit what became of us, the money, or the Union. All the substitutes were then turned over to the squad of Federal soldiers and marched about four miles out to Camp Morton, a

stockade enclosure covering about twenty acres, having a small creek running through it. We reached the camp about four o'clock in the afternoon, as empty as nail kegs with both heads out. They gave us a good dinner and the standing of the Union army was advanced somewhat in our estimation.

We were informed that we were to stay in the camp several days to drill and get our uniforms. Now as Bob and myself were averse to drilling and had enough money to buy a suit of a better color than Union blue, we decided we would not put the government to the expense of buying uniforms for us. The substitutes were not put under guard, but were permitted the freedom of the entire stockade, as were the regular soldiers. About ten men were assigned to each large tent. At ten o'clock that night, while Bob was snoring to the best of his ability, I quietly elbowed him until he awoke long enough to ask what was wrong with me. I whispered: "Get up and let's vacate! We did not come here to spend the summer!" It was dark and raining as we sneaked out to the ravine that passed through the stockade. We went under the fence where there was a 'water-gate, and returned to our hotel about midnight. The night clerk asked where we had been in the rain and how our clothes got so muddy. We told him we had been on a bum with some of his young city fellows and that they had pickled us in good shape. He laughed and remarked that it was one of their favorite pastimes. We retired, and about ten o'clock next morning we had breakfast served in our room. We had lunch at four and after dark we took a local freight train out of Indianapolis. We traveled about thirty miles on this freight and then boarded a regular passenger

train for Louisville, where we remained in disguise two days. We stopped at the Galt House and had a gay time with our greenbacks. From here Loudon went to St. Louis and I went to Memphis en route for Tupelo, Mississippi.

When I arrived at Memphis Captain Dan Able told me that Mrs. Thomas L. Snead and her daughter were at his house waiting for me to take them through the lines to Colonel Snead, who was chief of staff for General Price. I got my buggy and big bay mule, which I used for traveling below Memphis and had left in a barn in that city, and we left Memphis via the north road in order to avoid suspicion. In addition to the mail that I had sent on from St. Louis to Louisville I also had the mail from Kentucky for the troops from that state. We drove eight miles over the north road and passed the guards on the lines with a bogus pass. Having a lady and a little girl with me made it difficult to obtain accommodations at night, as the country through which we were passing had been devastated by both armies.

About July 25 we arrived at General Price's headquarters at Tupelo. The pleasure I experienced in uniting this overjoyed pair more than repaid me for the danger and trouble I had undergone. There was a two-thousand dollar reward for my capture dead or alive, and Mrs. Snead and the little girl would have fared badly had they been identified with me. I slept but little while taking them through the lines. Colonel Snead was not expecting them and they had been separated for more than a year. General Henry Little soon made his appearance and happy greetings followed, as they were old friends and neighbors. I related to General Little how I had visited his wife

and little girl the day I left St. Louis and that I had gained the wife's consent to take the little girl to see him; how General Morrison, his wife's father, had refused at the last moment to permit the child to go, and how disappointed we all were. The tears rolled down the general's face as he said: "Oh, how I do wish you had brought her! I know she would have been just as safe in your care as in my own and when you return I shall write to them to let her come." How treacherous and uncertain life is and war is! It was but a short time later that General Little was killed at the battle of Iuka. None of his family ever saw him after the sad and loving good-bye in St. Louis in May, 1861, when the troops left to fight for the Southern cause.

By the time I had delivered my charges to Colonel Snead no less than three hundred soldiers had gathered around and the same happy scene was enacted as on similar occasions in the past. Ah, many letters were not grasped by eager hands as before! The men to whom they were addressed were cold in death in shallow trenches around Corinth, as a result of the disastrous battles there.

After being royally entertained by both the Missouri and the Kentucky boys for three days and loaded with mail for both states I set my big bay mule in motion, headed for Memphis. For some reason I felt uneasy about driving into the city, so I went to Colonel Selby's home ten miles northwest of Memphis. There I left the mule and took a train for Louisville. Colonel Selby's daughter, Miss Emma, accompanied me and took all the mail with her in the sleeper while I looked after my own interests in the common coach and the smoker. We reached Louis-



ville about seven o'clock on the evening of July 29. Miss Selby and Miss Belle Shirley accompanied me to the theater that night and we were entertained at the latter's home. Next morning Miss Selby left for St. Louis with the Missouri mail and there reported to Mrs. Lizzie Baldwin, while I remained at Captain Shirley's in Louisville. His daughter, assisted by Miss Sudie Kendall and Mrs. Ferguson, took charge of the mail, most of which was for Louisville, Frankfort, and Lexington. The Kentuckians had as little facilities for army mail and news as our Missouri people had, and my advent into that territory was hailed as quite a blessing. I was badly scared and uneasy all the time I was there, for the Louisville people were nothing if not hospitable and as soon as they learned that the Rebel mail-carrier was in town they hunted the city over to find me, with the result that I could move about but little, fearing capture by the Federals. Had I met even a small number of those grateful friends, it would have been a question of but a few hours before I would have lodged in some Federal jail.

One of the Kentucky soldiers who had entrusted letters to me was Jesse White, and on the second day of my stay in Louisville I started on my mission of delivering them to his sisters. It had been at least two weeks since I had left young White in the vicinity of Chattanooga and during that time the papers had published an account of the battle at that place. The afternoon was quite warm and his home was about a mile from Louisville on the Portland Road. I was not familiar with the locality and had to be very cautious in making inquiries. I reached a beautiful home set back from the street. A lady dressed in

black was sitting on the porch, and I went in and asked her for a drink of water. She invited me to be seated, and when she returned with the water I entered into conversation with her. Everywhere the topic of universal interest was the war. She said her name was Buckner and that her son had been killed in the last battle near Chattanooga. When she mentioned him the tears rolled down her cheeks.

While we were talking two young ladies, both dressed in mourning, came out of the house and joined in the conversation about the son. The elder lady said: "I do not know your name, sir, but these are my daughters, Helen and Dora White." Then my eyes did bulge out for sure. I asked if their brother's name was Jesse N. White and one girl answered that it was. I then asked how they had learned of his death and was told they had seen his name among a list of dead printed in a Louisville paper. I asked how long it was since that list had been published and they said nearly two weeks. I told them with joy that they had been misinformed and that I had seen him and slept in the same tent with him two days after that battle. I then produced White's letters, one for each sister. The scene that followed is too sacred for me to write about. Permit me to say that after their joyous excitement had subsided somewhat each woman in turn gave me a fervent kiss of gratitude. By this time the tears were trickling down my own face as my heart joined with them in happy sympathy.

It was now twilight and when I proposed returning to Louisville they would not listen to me and I spent a happy night in their home. Before supper time the mother and sisters removed their mourning garments

and came out in colored gowns. Some of the neighbors were invited in to share their joy and we had music and singing. In one of White's letters he mentioned two or three neighbor boys and I had about ten letters for residents of that vicinity which I had been instructed to hand to Miss White for safe delivery. Before leaving Kentucky I again called on this happy family and they gave me more than twenty letters to carry back to the army.

Leaving Louisville, I made haste to gather a new consignment of letters to carry to the Missouri and Kentucky troops at Saltillo. I found that Miss Emma Selby had lost no time in collecting mail, and as a beginner in the grapevine enterprise she was a success. With the letters that had come in before her arrival in St. Louis and those collected since there was a big mail ready for me to carry through.

While I was in St. Louis Ex-Major John M. Wisner took me in his buggy to Dave Sappington's residence to see Captain Hampton Boone and Walter Scott, who had escaped from Lynch's negro pen a few nights previous. He also wanted me to see Bob Steward and John Carlin (son of Ex-Governor Carlin of Illinois). The latter was colonel of the Tenth Missouri Cavalry, who had used a rope to defraud the Federal government out of a board bill due the proprietors of the Gratiot Street prison. I had met all of them prior to this visit. Boone and Scott were in Lynch's negro pen when I was there in March, 1862, and had been imprisoned all this time.

These men wanted me to guide them through the lines and I consented to undertake the dangerous mission, provided they would obey my instructions to the letter. If they should cause my capture it meant

death to me, as I was under death sentence and a reward was offered for my capture dead or alive. When I told them we would have to go on a steamboat as far as Memphis they demurred. Steward objected because he had only one arm and would be easily identified thereby. John Carlin had fiery red hair and was sure he would be recognized as far as the human eye could penetrate. Under these convictions they declined to take a boat excursion. They undertook to go by the woods route and were unfortunate. Steward was killed by a squad of soldiers and John Carlin's horse was shot under him and he was captured by the Federals. When I acquired accommodations in Gratiot Street prison, the following month, Carlin was there to receive me. I will relate later how he escaped on June 18, 1864.

Boone and Scott met me at the home of our dear old friend, the most enthusiastic and lovable lady who ever lived, Mrs. Margaret A. E. McLure, who sacrificed everything she had in the world in aiding the Southern cause. No applicant for assistance, no matter how humble, was ever turned away from her presence with those cold-hearted words, "I can do nothing for you." Finally, when her possessions were all gone, the Federals imprisoned her in her own home. Her boarders were also imprisoned with her. She was later banished from St. Louis, leaving her family behind. She was well cared for in the South by ardent friends and admirers, and after the war her fortune was restored by wise investments. When she was laid away in Bellefontaine Cemetery not many years since hundreds of true friends were present with streaming eyes and gentle hands to aid in the last sad rites. Her dear sweet face and all her

Christian charity and noble deeds should ever be remembered by the Southern people. There was no one outside her own family who had an opportunity to know more of her sacrifices and devotion to the Southern cause than myself. Pardon my digression from my narrative. When Mrs. McLure's name comes to my mind I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration and kindly remembrance of her.

Boone, Scott, and myself left Mrs. McLure's house for the steamer *G. W. Graham* without delay, because the place was closely watched for Rebel renegades and it was unsafe for us to remain there. Boone and Scott had been provided with cabin passage tickets, but I was a miserable and branded transgressor, for whom a reward of two thousand dollars was posted all over the district, and I had to sneak down the levee in hobo attire. I picked up a box of freight on the levee and joined the procession of roustabouts who were loading the boat. Loading freight was not my main vocation in life and when I had carried that one box aboard I hid in the blacksmith shop until the *Graham* left the wharf, about eight o'clock at night. Bart Bowen, the boat's captain, was a staunch friend of mine. The pilot, Sam Bowen, was the identical chap who had been with me in the Ralls County Rangers at the beginning of the war. I was also well acquainted with the engineer and the barkeeper, David Shepard, all Southern sympathizers.

From that time until we reached Memphis I was a deck passenger. Boone and Scott remained upstairs and took no notice of me. When we reached a point a few miles above Wolf River, five miles above Memphis, they came down and we three got into the yawl,



which was being towed in the regulation way behind the steamer, turned it loose, and reached the shore in safety. We left the yawl in charge of a fisherman, who had a hut on the river bank just above town. The mate knew where we were to leave it for him to get later. On the steamer was an old schoolmate of mine, Frank McBeth, who went ashore in the yawl with us.

We stopped in Memphis with Frank Keaton, a former resident of St. Louis, who had rooms over his boat store near the wharf. Memphis was commanded at that time, as I recall, by Colonel Hurlburt. While there I donned a Federal fatigue uniform that I usually carried and Boone and I took a stroll about the outskirts of the town. We visited a large, old-fashioned frame house that stood on the river bank about a mile and a half below Memphis, near Jackson Mound. Before we reached the house we met a boy who told us his name was O'Leary, that he lived in the big house, that his father was a cook on a Federal tugboat up at Memphis and came home about once a week. We went back to town and about dusk we hired a hack, the driver of which assured us that he could take us by a circuitous route and get us out of Memphis without being challenged by a guard. We paid him five dollars to take the four of us (Scott, Boone, McBeth, and myself) and our baggage through the lines to the Mississippi River at Jackson Mound. There Scott and McBeth remained with the baggage and the Confederate mail while I went with Boone up the bank a few hundred yards to the residence of Mrs. O'Leary. It was then quite dark. We told her that there were a lot of Rebels crossing every night from the Memphis shore to the Island; that we wanted to investigate the Island, and Mr. O'Leary

had told us we could get a skiff at his house. She said, "Certainly, you can have anything you want." We asked her for a drink of water. She said, "Sure, and would yez rather have some lemonade?" The old lady mixed up some lemonade, of which we drank heartily. On offering to pay her for it she said, "Now, don't yez go to insulting me, ye Union soldiers, by offering to pay me for a little lemonade!" She then took us to the river bank and pointed out which skiff we might use and promised to have a nice breakfast of fried chicken ready for us the next morning. With the parting advice not to let the Rebs get us, she bade us good-bye.

With light hearts we stopped and picked up our companions, rejoicing over getting away from St. Louis successfully, our trip to Memphis, and the clever scheme we had worked upon Mrs. O'Leary. Going down the river we kept to the swift current. I was pulling the boat and Boone steering, with McBeth in the seat next to the stern and Scott lying in the bow with his head and shoulders resting on top of the boat. During the night we ran in between the forks of a great snag, which struck the boat and tilted it to one side. Scott, in his efforts to save himself, grasped one prong of the snag with both hands and the current took the boat from under him, leaving him hanging to the snag shouting for help. We were all so amused at his ridiculous predicament that it was some time before we could turn the boat upstream and get him aboard again, soaking wet and giving utterance to some good round oaths about such rowing and steering as had caused his mishap.

Next morning we had breakfast with Senator Christian, near the river bank. About three o'clock

in the afternoon we landed at Austin, Mississippi, where we traded Mrs. O'Leary's skiff to a man to carry us in his wagon to the railroad, by which means we reached Jackson on August 12. There were two large hotels in Jackson. The one we stopped at was called the Confederate Hotel. The rate was fifteen dollars per day, Confederate money. The service of the hotel was the same as before the war, but the bill of fare had fallen off not a little and now consisted of roast beef and mutton, boiled potatoes, kidney beans, cabbage, rice, molasses, and blackberry pie. The coffee was a mixture of roasted wheat and rye.

I parted from Boone, Scott, and McBeth and went to Saltillo, where I delivered my mail to the Confederate troops. Could my readers have been present to hear the shouts of joy of those men when they saw me bringing them news from loved ones at home and to see the unbounded delight and cheer they manifested during the next twenty-four hours all would have wished to enter the mail-carrying business. Of course, many soldiers did not receive letters, but few failed to hear from home as some messmate was sure to have a letter from their neighborhood. The next two days were spent ransacking every valise, bag, and box for writing paper, and anything on which a letter could be written was pressed into service. When I left Saltillo I was loaded with letters for Missouri and Kentucky. Well do I remember that on the night before I left camp this time we had a genuine old Methodist love feast and when I bade the boys good-bye the next morning little did I know that there were hundreds whom I should never see again. Oh, what a sad memory it is, and one that never fails to come to my mind between the twentieth of Sep-

tember and the fifth of October of each year of my life. Those dreadful battles around Iuka and Corinth took place at that time, and while I was confined in old Gratiot Street prison our Missouri and Kentucky boys were being slain by the hundreds.

I made fast time from Saltillo to St. Louis. On my arrival there Miss Elmyra Parker took the Kentucky mail to Louisville, where it was handled to perfection by my efficient lady assistants. I was soon relieved of the remainder of my burden of responsibility by turning my Missouri mail over to my St. Louis distributors, ladies who gladly gave their time and risked their lives to deliver it. I now paid a visit to my sweetheart, Miss Lucy Glascock, who lived in Ralls County. I then returned to St. Louis and registered at the Virginia Hotel under an assumed name.

Before leaving St. Louis for Hannibal I had learned that a number of steamboats were being moved for service on the lower Mississippi. Captain James B. Eads, who later built the great Eads Bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis, applied his talents to building government gunboats. He remodeled a large ferryboat, the *New Era*, and other similar craft into ironclads. One of the boats was called the *Essex*. Toward the end of August they were ready to leave St. Louis for the South. The *Thomas H. Benton* left a few days in advance of the *Essex*. Before the latter boat left St. Louis the public was invited to inspect it, and to make any suggestions they deemed helpful for the complete annihilation of the Rebels. I did not accept the invitation at that time, fearing I might be recognized by some uncongenial acquaintance in the vast throng of visitors, but while I was standing at the wharf some distance

away it occurred to me that it was not really necessary for that hellish invention to be permitted to run at large for the destruction of my friends in the South. I decided to act at once, so I called on a friend of mine, Frank Parsons, manager and agent for the Laffin-Smith Powder Company. He had charge of a large stone building used as a magazine, which was just above Bissel's Point on the west bank of the Mississippi. Parsons took me to a magazine and gave me several pounds of giant powder, a glycerine preparation, and some other powerful explosives. From a tin shop I procured five tin cans, about sixteen inches in length and four inches in diameter. With this outfit I went to Bill Hamilton's blacksmith shop, which covered almost a quarter of a city block on the corner of Commercial and Cherry streets, one short block from where the *Essex* was lying at the wharf.

Hamilton provided a lot of cement, and divided the explosives and placed them in the four tin cans. We set the fifth can on top of the other four and coiled a lot of fuse in it, pouring in the cement with the fuse, and leaving the end of the fuse sticking out of the can a few inches. A separate fuse about a foot long was then attached and we placed the whole deadly apparatus in an old carpetbag. I lighted the fuse, picked up the bag, and hastened aboard the *Essex*. I told the guard who stood at the foot of the steps that I had brought some baggage for Captain Duffy, the pilot of the boat. He said he could not let me go upstairs until the corporal came and that I would have to wait a few minutes. This was not encouraging information, as my carpetbag was alive and soon would be kicking. While I stood there every moment





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seemed an hour. I imagined I could hear the “scit! scit! scit!” of the fuse burning and every hair on my head stood straight up. In a short time I told the guard to tell Captain Duffy that I would bring the baggage back again in an hour or so. I then retired at the best speed I could and walked swiftly for the blacksmith shop, expecting every moment to be blown to kingdom come.

At the blacksmith shop I hurriedly jerked out the fuse. It had only about four inches left to burn. After my hair settled down once more I joined with Hamilton in a hearty laugh. That one trial satisfied my desire for excitement and I decided not to return to the *Essex* in an hour, or, indeed, at all. On the boat all was confusion and hurry in preparation for the departure and no one noticed me or the sound of the burning fuse—but I heard it.

When the *Essex* left the wharf she went up the river four or five miles to turn around and show off as she went down the stream past the city. As she passed Walsh’s Mill, near North Market Street, the mill men concluded they would salute her by waving a Rebel flag, whereupon a party from the boat landed and took the men prisoners. They were carried down to Cairo and there put ashore to return the best way they could. While they were prisoners on the *Essex* they were made to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. On their return they were ridiculed by the Feds and the Rebels alike, but they took it in good humor. They presented the Rebel flag to the *Essex* as her first capture.



## CHAPTER VI.

### A DEATH SENTENCE AND A REPRIEVE

THE Virginia Hotel stood on the corner of what is now Main Street and Lucas Avenue. I began collecting my mail for the army preparatory to departing for the South. I had directed that a great many letters be addressed to me in care of this hotel under my assumed name, "John Cooley." One of the hotel clerks was a Southern man and I was told that the other held the same sentiment, but it proved otherwise. My receipt of so many letters aroused his suspicion and he reported the fact to the government detectives. For safety I sent one of the bellboys of the hotel with my baggage (a carpetsack) to the ferryboat *Christy*, which was lying at the wharf at the foot of Carr Street. I followed the boy at a distance and was hidden near the boat when I saw a detective follow him on board. I had instructed the boy to set the bag down in the engine room and ask the engineer, Charles Corey, a friend of mine, to look after it. The detective followed the boy off the boat. I let it make one trip across the river and when it was about ready to go the next trip I boarded it.

Just as the boat backed out into the river the detective jumped aboard. Two others came to me and asked if I had a pass to leave the city. I showed them a bogus pass; they asked to see my baggage, but I told them I had none. They now sent a third man to a locker, where they had placed the carpetsack, and



brought it to me with a request to open it. It was placed on the floor of the deck and we were standing near the rail. I pulled the key out of my pocket and bent over as if to unlock it, but instead of doing so I grabbed it with both hands and threw it as far as I could out into the river. It contained about three thousand Rebel letters. The detectives ran to the rail to look after it and called to some boys in a skiff to catch the bag. While they were doing this I stuck into my mouth and chewed up about ten pages of tissue paper on which were written official documents for the army. One of the detectives drew a revolver and said if I destroyed another paper he would shoot my head off. I told them that was all I had of any importance. They took me back across the river to St. Louis, where I was taken before Provost Marshal McConnell, who questioned me for some time—until a man appeared bearing the carpetsack full of letters that had been rescued from the river. Many of the letters had been written by St. Louis society ladies, among whom McConnell was a bright star, and he hugely enjoyed the letters they had written to their sweethearts in the Southern army. He had extracts from many of these letters published in the St. Louis papers, which the ladies enjoyed in a forced way.

After my interview with McConnell, I was escorted to the Gratiot Street prison by the detectives who had arrested me. The McDowell Medical College, now the Gratiot Street prison, was a large building with two rooms on each side of a hallway on the lower floor. The part in which I was confined was the old McDowell dwelling and this was connected with the college portion by a passage at the second story. One of the rear rooms on the first floor was used as a din-

ing-room for the prison officers. The front room adjoining this was used as an office. There were two large vacant rooms on the north side of the hall. I was kept in the office for a few days and had access to the dining-room, where the guards and officers could see me all the time. A large porch extended across the entire length of the house in front and from this there were eight steps that led to the pavement.

The handcuffs I wore were similar to the ones I wore in the Cairo prison; the only difference was a tap, or nut, secured on one end of the bolt which went through the top of the clevis-like portion that was around my wrist. The handcuffs were placed on me with my hands and arms behind my back. One day Captain Bishop, keeper of the prison, and the military captain, Allen, together with two of the sergeants and clerks of the prison were seated at the table enjoying their dinner. There was one vacant place. Captain Bishop jokingly said, "Ab, have some dinner with us?" "Thank you, Captain Bishop," I replied. I at once "skinned the cat" backward through my arms and the handcuffs and walking over to an iron mantel in the room, I hammered the iron tap on the handcuffs against the mantel. This soon loosened the tap, which I easily unscrewed, pulled out the bolt, laid the handcuffs on the mantel, and sat down to the table. They all laughed and Captain Bishop said, "That is pretty good, you have earned your dinner." When we had finished dinner I replaced the handcuffs and tap.

Next day I was provided with a pair of cuffs of a different type. A thirty-two pound cannon ball and chain was placed on my ankle, and I was transferred

to the rear parlor on the north side of the hall in solitary confinement. In this room there was a large grated window that overlooked the back yard. There was one door that led into the hall; this was fastened with a padlock, the key to which was kept in the office. One guard stood outside this door and another outside the grated window, on the porch, where he could look into my room. They had nothing to do but guard me. I had no furniture of any kind except a large, high-backed rocking chair, an empty soap box, a tin washpan, a cotton-top mattress and two quilts, with the floor as a bedstead. At night a lantern was hung on a large spike driven into the outer edge of the window casing. A folding door, which was barred and nailed shut, led from my room into the front parlor. In the parlor were two ladies, Mrs. Sappington and Mrs. Zeigler, who were imprisoned for aiding Confederate soldiers.

On September 10, escorted by four guards and wearing my handcuffs and the ball and chain, I was taken out of the prison for trial. My shackle chain was just long enough to permit me to carry the big cannon ball in my arms, and I attracted much attention as I passed along the streets. I was escorted to General John B. Grey's headquarters on the corner of Fourth and Washington avenues, the same room where Sam Clemens, Sam Bowen, and myself had slipped away from General Grey at the beginning of the war. When I was taken into his office he rose and shook hands with me and laughed about the trick I had played on him. I had to force a smile, as I was too much concerned over the outcome of my impending trial to be in a mood to laugh.

The charges made against me were that I was a

Confederate mail-carrier and a spy. General Grey was president of the court-martial. Provost Marshal McConnell was present with the letters that had been captured by the boy in a skiff, so the evidence was indisputable. I plead guilty to the charge of mail-carrying but not to that of spy. I was convicted on both charges, notwithstanding, and sentenced "to be shot to death on the first Friday in the month of December, 1862, in the center of the parade ground in Benton Barracks near St. Louis, or at such other time and place as the commanding general may direct."

I was escorted back to my parlor prison room in a very sorrowful frame of mind. I concluded the only way I could evade that sentence was to escape from the prison and make my way back to General Price's army in Dixie. I began to plan that trip ere the time of my execution should arrive.

I have mentioned that Mrs. Sappington and Mrs. Zeigler were prisoners in the front parlor. I could easily converse with them through the closed folding door. They were both friends of mine and had aided me in my work of mail collection. My meals were brought to me from the table of the prison officers by an old negro woman named Maria. She would bring the key from the office and the guard stationed outside my door would unlock the door for her. She then placed the tray holding my meal upon the soap box and when I had finished eating she would return the key to the office after the guard had locked the door. At my request the guard at my door would get the key and escort me to the toilet, a small shed in the yard. One day as I stepped into this shed, the guard remained outside. I found a man named J. G. Chap-

man in the shed, hidden behind the door, unknown to my guard. I requested him to procure some tools by which I might make my escape. He was to hide them in the shed beneath the seat, where they would not be discovered. When I left the building Chapman again stepped behind the door and the guard was unaware of his presence. That evening Chapman passed my window and raised his hand, which was the signal agreed upon. After dark I requested the guard to escort me to the yard. I found a large butcher-knife which Chapman had procured from the kitchen and a bar of iron about three feet long, an inch wide, and half an inch thick, which had been used as a poker for the kitchen stove. The knife and poker I slipped inside my underwear and the guard escorted me to my room.

The ladies in the front room were permitted to receive visitors. A number of my friends called on them in order to communicate with me, as we could easily converse through the doors. At the bottom of the doors, in the center, was a small hole where a bolt that had fastened the doors to the floor had been broken off. The rats had enlarged the hole and through it my friends passed me small articles. Among those who thus visited me was Mrs. Deborah H. Wilson. She gave me, through the hole in the door, a spring-backed, single-blade knife, or dirk, which was very valuable to me, as I will now explain.

It had been my custom to lie on my mattress in a corner of the room for hours at a time rocking my chair with my foot. The chair had a high back and I placed a newspaper or my coat over it. The chair stood in such a position that the guard at my window could not see me as I lay on the mattress rocking the



chair, but as he saw the chair in constant motion he was sure I was close by. I slipped the mattress out from the wall a bit and with the knife I split the tongue in the flooring and with the aid of three places where the planks "butted" together I had no difficulty in removing three pieces of flooring, each four inches wide and three feet long. These planks I could then take up and replace at will. By inserting three small pieces of wood in the cuts at the ends of the planks it was almost impossible to discover that the floor had been tampered with.

In the meantime I met Chapman in the yard again as before and made known to him my plans to escape. Between the building I occupied and the medical college part of the prison was an entrance or alley, about four feet wide, leading out to Eighth Street. Over this alley was a second floor passageway connecting the two buildings. At the end of the alley next to Eighth Street was a board fence composed of four large planks set on end so that they reached from the second-floor passage to the sidewalk, thus closing the opening from the yard to Eighth Street. The four planks were of poplar, two inches thick. They were fastened together by a scantling four inches square nailed crosswise of the planks. In this alley was kept the prison woodpile, which was heaped up almost to the floor of the overhead passage. Chapman was among the prisoners who had access to the yard in the daytime. I instructed him to climb over the woodpile to the front entrance where the plank partition was and pile the wood behind him so that it would not obstruct my entrance into the alley when I had cut a hole in the foundation wall under the room in which I was imprisoned. When the roll was called in Chap-

man's room daily someone would answer "present" for him.

When all was in readiness I tied a long string to the rocking chair and passed it through the hole in the door to Mrs. Sappington. She pulled the string, thus rocking the chair as I had been accustomed to do with my foot, giving the guard the impression that I was lying on the mattress. Mrs. Zeigler danced and sang and made all the noise she could in order to drown any noise I might make under the house while cutting on the wall. When I went through the floor to the space under the house I found there was no excavation, the ground being about one foot from the joist at the rear of the house and sloping to four feet below the floor at the front, or Eighth Street side. The wall was eighteen inches thick, built of large stones mortared together. I undertook to dig under the foundation but found it impracticable, so I sat on the ground with my feet in the hole I had dug and set to work on the wall where the stone and brick joined, using my butcher-knife and bar of iron. I succeeded shortly in removing a large stone, which I drew under the house. Unfortunately, Chapman had not succeeded in removing the wood from the spot where I removed the stone from the foundation, so I decided to wait until next day to finish the work. I crawled back to my room, replaced the planks in the floor, and went to sleep. Previous to the above incidents I had extracted two nails from the wall of my room and scraped them on the stone wall until they fitted the locks of my handcuffs and I could remove the cuffs at will.

Next morning I held another consultation with Chapman and he worked on the woodpile again so

that he could get to the plank partition at the end of the alley next to the street and endeavor to uncover the hole I had made in the wall. Then he slipped, undiscovered, back to his room on the second floor of the prison. Next night about ten o'clock I went to work again. The ladies rocked the chair as before. They provided me with a candle to use under the house and in the alley. I pulled about half a cord of wood through the hole and placed it under the house. When I had removed the wood I crawled out through the hole and found Chapman in the alley waiting for me. With the knife Mrs. Wilson had given me I cut a place across one of the broad poplar boards about four feet above the ground and three and a half feet above the scantling that held the boards together. With this leverage I easily bent the plank down, which afforded us an opening to the street.

Chapman had obtained for me a case knife which I hacked with the butcher-knife until I made a hacksaw of it. With this I sawed off the two rivets which fastened the shackle and thirty-two pound cannon ball to my ankle. I placed the rivets in my pocket and still have them as souvenirs. I left the shackle and the ball and chain in the hole I had dug under the foundation, covering them with a little earth.

Mrs. Sappington and Mrs. Zeigler had provided me with thread, needle, and some yellow envelopes, which were much used in that day. I had an extra red flannel shirt, the lower part of which I tore into strips and sewed them together, forming a long sash. The shirt cuffs I sewed to the shoulders of my coat, together with the envelopes, thus making a pair of artillery lieutenant's epaulets, or shoulder straps. In this way I was disguised as a Federal officer of the

day. When we finished cutting the planks it was about eleven at night. The moon was shining bright.

Across the street was a long row of three-story brick houses, called Johnson's Barracks, which were occupied by a regiment of Federal soldiers who did guard duty around the prisons and storehouses in St. Louis. It was the custom to sound a call at twelve o'clock at night, when the twenty men who guarded the prison would assemble in the middle of Eighth Street. After the roll was called they marched to the north part of Gratiot Prison, which was a large four-story building, about one hundred and fifty feet long and ninety feet wide. The top story was used as a hospital, the second and third stories for quarters for prisoners, and the lower story as a cook-room. The number of Confederate prisoners in the entire building varied from three hundred to one thousand. When the twenty guards passed into the door from Eighth Street the two men in front took their stations on either side of the door, the relieved guards from the door walked behind the relief guards and followed on around the prison, until all the guards were replaced by relief. As the twenty guards going off duty left the prison they passed across the big porch where the two guards stood, one on each side of the head of the steps, and walked down the eight wooden steps leading to the sidewalk. As they turned south on Eighth Street to go around to Gratiot Street, Chapman and I left our secluded corner in the alley, which was shaded by a projection of the building, and walked north on Eighth Street, passing within three feet of the two guards who stood at either side of the north entrance to the prison.

My disguise as a lieutenant and our bold move-

ments prevented any suspicion. They evidently supposed that we were some of the relieved guards and paid no attention to us. We went on north around the Christian Brothers Academy and then turned west on Ninth Street, and south on Chouteau Avenue, and east on the south side of Chouteau Avenue. We had proceeded about a block when we passed a house that was all lighted up, with an entertainment or party evidently in progress. A man was standing at the front gate and as we passed I recognized him as Father Ryan, who in after years became Archbishop of Philadelphia. We were great friends, and he was much interested in my welfare throughout the war. He was overjoyed to see me, knowing that I had been condemned to death and was to be executed in a short time. He requested me to wait at the gate a moment while he brought his sister out of the house and introduced her to me. I have forgotten who lived in the house, but a wedding was being celebrated and he had performed the ceremony.

Just before my escape from Gratiot Street prison there was an epidemic of smallpox in the prison and in the city of St. Louis. Many of the Confederate prisoners were stricken with it. The Federal soldiers who acted as home guards were a regiment of old men known as "Gray Beards." One day several of the prison officers went up town together, leaving only the guards in charge of the main entrance. There was a prisoner upstairs who had a large boil on the side of his nose. The other boys in his room put him on a cot and with some red ink and dough made pimples on his face, so that he was a repulsive sight. Colonel Robert McDonald, a prominent lawyer of St. Louis, who was one of the prisoners, wore a black



silk hat and a long coat, and had a gold-headed cane.

A plan was laid by the prisoners to permit several to escape. McDonald started down the steps and one of the boys called out: "Oh, doctor! Wait a moment! What are you going to do about that man in our room who has the smallpox? We will all be certain to take it if you leave him here!" McDonald replied, "I will go right now and get a conveyance and take him down to the quarantine hospital." The guards thought he was a doctor and permitted him to pass out of the prison. He returned shortly with a baggage wagon and went upstairs. In a few minutes down went four men carrying the cot with the smallpox victim thereon. He was covered to his neck with a sheet, and his face presented a frightful appearance. The two guards moved as far away from the head of the stairs as they could. Colonel McDonald went down in front and the patient was placed in the baggage wagon. The four who carried him climbed into the wagon and with the doctor they drove off.

When Captain Bishop and Sergeant Streeter returned they inquired of the guards if any of the officers from headquarters had been there during their absence. The guards told them no one had been there except the doctor and that he had taken that sick man to the quarantine. Captain Bishop was amazed at this statement and an investigation was made. The result was the old Gray Beards were relieved from duty and an Illinois regiment was substituted in their place.

The day before I escaped from Gratiot I had notified Mrs. Pickering through Mrs. Vail that I would be at her house on October 2 about midnight and she was to leave the door unlocked. When Chapman and

I arrived at Mrs. Pickering's we found quite a party of young people. They had grown tired of waiting for us and were asleep on the floor. When we walked in we received a most hearty welcome. Mrs. Pickering's home was on the corner of Christy Avenue (now called Lucas Avenue) and Nineteenth Street. It was a small frame house that stood away back in the yard, and there was a hydrant just inside the front gate. Knowing that the Federal authorities were aware of the fact that Mrs. Vail and Mrs. Pickering were sisters and great friends of mine, I felt certain that her house would be the first place that would be searched for me. I left just after daylight and went to Mrs. Wood's house on Fourteenth Street between Market and Walnut, while Chapman remained at Mrs. Pickering's. About nine o'clock in the morning he came to me with a needle and thread hanging to his coat, and scared within an inch of death. His explanation was that his coat had been torn on the woodpile at Gratiot and while one of the girls was mending it four soldiers had entered the front yard; he did not wait to ascertain their business, but went over the back fence as fast as he could go. We afterwards learned that the soldiers had entered the yard merely to obtain a drink at the hydrant and knew nothing of Chapman.

Later in the morning I met Mrs. Vail, who told me she had a permit to enter the prison and get my soiled linen that day. I told her to go on and not to hint that she knew I was out and then to report to me how the prison officers' pulses were beating. When she reached the prison steps she met Sergeant Heutershirt, a German, who was just going on duty. She told him she had a permit to get Mr. Grimes' soiled

linen for laundrying. He said, "Gif me your baskit." When he returned some fifteen minutes later he threw the basket down the steps and said, "Dere is your baskit!" "Well, where are the clothes?" "Grimes is gone and he took every damned rag mit 'im!" "Where is he gone?" "How in hell do I know? He is gone—nobody didn't go mit 'im. If you want to know so damned bad where he is gone you go down to the corner and you can find out when you see all dem holes he cut in de house." By this time she was very much amused, but restrained her laughter as she dared not anger the man. She walked to the corner of the building and there stood a soldier guarding the holes as unconcerned as if he did not know why he was there. As she was leaving the spot Captain Hinter escorted her back to the prison office. After a half-hour's grilling Captain Bishop said to her, "You know very well where Grimes is." He told her to go away and stay away.

I was later told by the Boogher brothers that the morning following our escape from Gratiot old Aunt Maria, the negro waitress, entered my room with my breakfast, as was her custom, and found it vacant. She was very much excited and dropped the tray of dishes and food upon the floor and shouted to the guard to lock the door quick as Mr. Grimes had "done gone up de chimney." She ran to the dining-room and office and announced my departure in a loud voice, which caused a grand rush of officers and guards to my room. When I left the room I managed to work the planks in the floor into place and arranged the mattress so it would fall down over them when I went under the house. The first thing they did was to jerk the mattress aside, but as there

was little light in the room the floor did not show where it had been cut. Finally Sergeant Streeter stepped on the end of one of the cut planks and he went down.

I remained in close hiding at Mrs. Wood's house for three days, but that was no task, as Mrs. Wood was a refined Southern lady and had three charming daughters who were good musicians and entertained me delightfully. However, I did reluctantly bid them good-bye on the night of October 5. With Mrs. Vail and Mrs. M. A. E. McLure as escorts Chapman and myself went out into the suburbs to the home of Mrs. Rogers. It was on what is now Benton Street near Twenty-First, where the old reservoir was in after years. Mrs. Rogers owned quite a large tract of land there, set with fruit trees and shrubbery. On our way we noticed two men following us and our knees shook as we made that midnight journey. Mrs. McLure and Mrs. Vail left us at Mrs. Rogers' home and went back to town alone. Such trips were no novelty to these two undaunted Southern women and whenever they had an opportunity to escort a Confederate prisoner to safety they feared nothing. Mrs. Rogers had a lovely daughter, Miss Josie, who entertained us.

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At the breakfast table Mrs. Rogers asked her gardener why he had been late getting home the night before. He said he had been down at Bechner's Garden drilling. "Drilling for what?" "I am going to join the state militia under Frank P. Blair and we have to drill every night." Mrs. Rogers retained her equilibrium. Chapman rolled his eyes toward the gardener and told the most elaborate untruth he could summon by saying, "I think that is a fine or-

ganization and I have been intending to join for some time." I had been enjoying my breakfast, but that gardener's remark took away my appetite and I soon excused myself and left the table. His being associated with the state militia was not conducive to my safety just then, so we bade Mrs. Rogers and her accomplished daughter adieu. It is needless to say that Mrs. Rogers granted her gardener all his time to drill.

We went back to the city and made preparations to go south on the steamer *G. W. Graham*. My efficient distributors, the ladies, had placed a large number of letters in care of Miss Amanda Bowen of Hannibal, a sister of Captain Bart Bowen and Sam Bowen, the pilot. The Bowen brothers owned the *Graham*. Miss Bowen had been banished from her home at Hannibal for giving assistance to Confederates and was spending her time with her brothers on the steamer, which made round trips from St. Louis to Memphis. Chapman was but little known and he made the trip as a cabin passenger. I occupied my usual stateroom, which extended over the entire lower deck and was not numbered.

The *Graham* was usually late in getting away from port, so I made it convenient to be late going aboard. Miss Bowen and Chapman carried my clothing and I wore a suit of hobo attire. I met them at Frank Keaton's boat store on the levee at Memphis. Miss Bowen turned the mail over to me and then returned to the *Graham*. Mr. Keaton referred us to the Eagle Hotel, a private house kept by the two Misses Rudisell, who entertained only Southerners. We stayed there two days.

Memphis was under martial law, but it was not



strictly enforced. Persons entering the city were not molested, but those leaving were subjected to a careless search of vehicles. Miss Jennie Rudisell secreted part of our mail in her clothing and took Chapman with her. I was chaperoned by Miss Fannie Ballard, one of Memphis' many beautiful girls. We traveled in a one-horse "family carriage," a kind of surrey. When we neared the pickets about a mile outside of Memphis it was the noon hour. The lieutenant in charge of the outpost was standing by the roadside while his men ate their dinner about fifty yards away. We drove up to the lieutenant and stopped. He informed us that he would have to search our carriage. Miss Fannie asked him if we should get out and he replied in the affirmative. She gave him one of her sweetest smiles and held out her hand for assistance. I climbed out on the far side and went to the horse's head and held him, cautioning the lieutenant to be careful of the steed's heels, as he was a bit dangerous. That old horse never kicked anything in his life. My underwear was lined from neck to heel with Rebel letters and I made an excuse to keep out of sight as much as possible.

The lieutenant searched the carriage, but we had no baggage whatever. Miss Fannie told him we were going into the country three miles to spend the day with friends. I was the first to get into the carriage and the lieutenant, who seemed very favorably impressed with Miss Fannie, assisted her into the vehicle; in so doing the bottoms of a pair of big cavalry boots caught on the edge of the carriage bed and stared the man square in the face! Miss Fannie's face was very red as the lieutenant took hold of one of the boots and tried to pull it away but found that

it was fastened under her clothing to her waist. He smilingly asked her, "May I inquire, miss, if these boots fit you?" With much confusion she answered, "No, sir, but they fit a very dear friend of mine out here in the country." He glanced quickly toward where his men were eating their lunch and feeling sure they had not seen the boots he said, "You may take them to him this time, but do not try to take anything else." She gave him her hand in gratitude and bade him good-bye as we drove off. Our hearts did not assume their natural positions until we were several miles away. We congratulated ourselves on our narrow escape from arrest, and I have ever remembered that lieutenant with gratitude and pleasure.

Miss Rudisell and Chapman went by train and joined us at Hernando, Mississippi, twelve miles southwest of Memphis, where we all dined. I related to them Miss Ballard's experience with the cavalry boots and the kind-hearted lieutenant, and Miss Rudisell teased Miss Ballard about the impression she had made upon him. The ladies returned to Memphis in the carriage and Chapman and I went on to Holly Springs, where we found the Missouri Confederate troops. We certainly got a warm reception when I delivered my large mail, as the boys had received no letters from home since my last trip to them.

Chapman decided to assist me with the mail-carrying. On his next trip south he was captured at Columbus, Kentucky, and kept in prison there about a month. He was then put aboard the steamer *May Forsyth* with four guards and a sergeant as attendants, with orders to report at St. Louis. While the

boat was running close to the shore (the water was very high) a few miles below Cape Girardeau, Chapman, who was standing on the larboard side of the boat directly in front of the wheelhouse, suddenly ran from his guard and jumped overboard in an endeavor to swim ashore and escape. Hampered by his handcuffs, he was drawn under the wheel by the suction it created, and killed. Thus ended the career of a noble young man. He was a protégé and adopted son of old Doctor Johnson of St. Louis, who was well known to thousands of citizens in former years.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A RESCUE AND AN ESCORT

I LEFT Holly Springs for Memphis on October 20. There I learned from one of my distributors, Miss Annie Perdue, that my partner, Robert Loudon, had gone into quarters with the Federals at Columbus, Kentucky, with no definite arrangement as to how long his engagement was to continue. I left Memphis the next day, accompanied by Miss Bertie Smith. She was to carry the mail for Missouri and Kentucky to St. Louis and there send the latter by express to Miss Sudie Kendall at Louisville. I stopped off at Columbus, pretending I wanted to buy some horses. I had some good friends, named Ellis, in Columbus and I stayed with them. They informed me that Bob had been chased into Columbus from Missouri and was captured at night just as his skiff landed. He was charged with burning the fine steamer *Ruth*, as she lay at the wharf just below Cape Girardeau. She had the United States army paymaster aboard with several hundred thousand dollars in money for the Federal troops. Both boat and money were a total loss, and at this late date it is safe to say that the account the Federals had against Bob was just and payable.

The military prison at Columbus was a secure one, being a large, four-story tobacco factory with extra strong walls; the first story built of stone, and brick above. All the windows were securely barred with iron rods an inch in diameter running from the lower



to the upper sills, with four flat crossbars through which the vertical rods passed. The sills were of stone. A brick wall ten feet high had been erected all around the prison about six feet from the building so that no one could get close to the outside walls. If a prisoner succeeded in getting out of the prison itself he had still to scale this wall before he could escape. No guards patrolled the outside of the prison except at the entrance. There were but few prisoners at this time, as a big shipment had been made to Camp Chase, Ohio, a few days before. My friends told me exactly where Bob was located, in the third story and quite a distance from the front door, where guards were stationed night and day. A guard patrolled the halls inside each story. A lady to whom I was introduced by my friends said she was permitted to take laundry to her husband, who was confined in the room next to Louden, on the third floor. She said there were no windows opening upon the hall and the doors were kept locked. There were three other men in the room with her husband, but Bob was alone.

I was greatly relieved when I learned these facts. Before leaving Memphis I had procured the finest twelve-inch hack-saw to be had. It could be adjusted to work in a space of an inch and a half and with it an inch iron rod could be cut in two in three minutes' time. My friends had some acquaintances who lived near the prison, and from one of their windows could be seen two of the windows in Bob's room. I was not long in occupying that window and signaling to him that I was there to help him. I then laid my plans for his rescue. I had Mrs. Ellis purchase for me two toy balloons and seventy-five feet of fishline and the same length of rope. That day Mrs. Ellis' friend

visited her husband and bore this message for him to convey to Bob, "Stay at your west window to-night at ten o'clock; follow the woman on the left corner." The night was dark and the streets were poorly lighted. Providence seemed to favor us in every way as there was a southerly breeze blowing directly toward the prison building. I made the fish-line fast to the balloons, then the saw was tied into the fishline and the rope at the other end of the line. I had the rope and line coiled very carefully into a market basket in such a way that there was no possibility of its becoming tangled. I crept up to the high wall and stood within its shadow, just beneath Bob's window, on the sidewalk and freed the balloons, which rose and were blown by the breeze against the bars of his window. In a moment I felt Bob jerking on the line and then up went the rope. There was a row of trees along the outer edge of the sidewalk; I tied the lower end of the rope to one of them so Bob's weight would not land him inside the high brick wall, and then retired to a safe distance to watch developments. Bob cut the iron bars with the hack-saw and tied the rope around his bed. He had been a fireman and was an expert at rope climbing, and not more than fifteen minutes elapsed before I saw him coming down the rope and safely out over the brick wall surrounding the building. Miss Mary Ellis was waiting on the appointed corner. When Loudon reached the walk she walked rapidly away and he followed her. I took a roundabout route to Mrs. Saunders' house and when Bob arrived with Miss Mary we embraced each other fervently, while the tears flowed from our eyes. Bob still had the hack-saw, but he had left the rope for the next ungrateful

guest of the government. We left Columbus that same night and I reached Louisville on October 31. Bob went south to the army in Mississippi and from there he was sent by General Joe Johnston with important dispatches for emissaries in Chicago who were planning an uprising among the Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas.

I went to St. Louis and found all flourishing, remained a few days and then departed south with the mail. At Holly Springs I learned that the Rebel army was at Abbeyville, where I arrived November 12, 1862. The army was very hard at work throwing up breastworks. I carried with me St. Louis papers that gave an account of General John McNeil's execution of ten innocent men, citizens and soldiers, at Palmyra, Missouri, on account of the disappearance of a man named Allsman. McNeil was several times notified that the Southern soldiers knew nothing about Allsman; nevertheless he made the ten men ride two miles on their coffins to the Fair Grounds, where each coffin was placed at the foot of an open grave, each man sat on the foot of his coffin, and as he was shot fell over into it.

The account of the affair created greater consternation in the Abbeyville camp than anything else that happened during the war. Bonfires were built and many speeches made. One ever to be remembered was delivered by General Frank M. Cockrell, in after years a United States senator from Missouri. When the speeches and demonstrations were over I think there was not a man in that camp who would not have reenlisted for life to avenge the dastardly deed.

I remained in Abbeyville three days. The wind was blowing a hurricane all the time and the air was

filled with sand that cut our faces like sleet. All we had to eat was beef, bread, and large white sweet potatoes roasted in open fires. I had carried hundreds of letters to camp on this trip and when I departed on November 15 I had all I could possibly handle. I hastened to St. Louis by rail through Kentucky and Illinois. While driving from the camp to the railroad on the second evening I reached a swamp or wilderness. Near by was a new log cabin, whose surroundings indicated that the place was inhabited by an industrious man. I stopped to inquire the way and the distance to the next house. A man and a woman came to the door. The man said it was six miles to the next house and that it was only a squatter's cabin. He invited me to stay with them, saying he had plenty of feed for my horse and that I was quite welcome. I gladly accepted his kind invitation, and, dismounting, went with him to the house, where I was introduced to his wife, who was apparently about twenty years old. While Mrs. Stone was preparing supper I busied myself wondering what disposition would be made of me when bedtime came, as they had but one room and one bed. We had a good supper, to which I did ample justice. They were a jovial pair and we chatted about the war without restraint. During our conversation Mrs. Stone remarked: "I only wish I could get a pair of shoes from those Yankees in some way. I know they have plenty of everything up North." I produced from my grip a pair of serviceable shoes, ladies' size four, and said, "Try these on, Mrs. Stone." She was much surprised and delighted when she found they fitted her. I told her a friend of mine in Meridian had given them to me to exchange for a larger pair; that it was not at all necessary for

me to carry them all the way back, as I could easily get another pair, and it gave me much pleasure to present them to her. Her joy and gratitude were great.

At nine o'clock Mr. Stone said, "Mr. Grimes, our accommodations are rather limited and you will have to sleep with us." This was a new one for me, but many strange things had to be done during war time. Mr. Stone told me to undress and get over next to the wall—that the bed was large enough for all three of us. Somewhat reluctantly I obeyed, and got into bed with my face to the wall. Mr. Stone lay down next to me and Mrs. Stone retired on the bedrail. The unstinted hospitality of this plain, whole-souled pair occupied my mind for some time before I dropped off to sleep. In the morning they arose early and Mr. Stone went to attend to the horses while Mrs. Stone prepared breakfast. Meanwhile, I lay puzzling my brain as to how I was to get out of bed and dress in full sight of the lady. However, she left the room for some stove-wood and I hastily donned my clothes in her absence. After breakfast Mrs. Stone tied up a generous lunch for me and exacted a promise that I would come their way and stay with them again. As our army moved farther south I never saw them again, but their kindness and unusual hospitality to me, an utter stranger, will ever be gratefully remembered.

When I reached Memphis my mainstay, Miss Annie Perdue, was ready, as always, to go and protect the mail and deliver it safely. Miss Perdue made the trip to St. Louis and return. When we reached St. Louis this time I had a great many letters from the commands of General Martin E. Green and Gen-



eral Porter for relatives in northeastern Missouri. Miss Amanda Bowen was a native of Hannibal and was well acquainted in the northeast section of the state, being a graduate of Christian College at Canton, so she was sent on a trip to Hannibal, Kirksville, Edina, and other towns that (with the exception of Hannibal) had been neglected hitherto by our distributors. This time the mail was expressed in packages to prominent citizens in the several towns and in this way the people were blessed with direct communication with the Confederate army, and the army likewise with news from home. This mail left St. Louis November 28, when Miss Perdue went to Louisville carrying all the mail from Missouri. The lady distributors had their skirts made double in such a way that they could stow away more than a thousand letters. The hoop skirts and ruffled dresses were a most fortunate and convenient fashion at that time.

When I reached Memphis on December 4 I met Captain Dan Able, a cotton broker of that city, whose home was a rendezvous for all the Rebel women who had been banished from St. Louis or anywhere else, as also of women going south to see their husbands or sons in the army. Captain Able told me there were three ladies at his home whom he wished me to conduct through the lines: Mrs. Clay Taylor, whose husband was chief of ordnance on General Price's staff, Miss Cornelia Polk, daughter of Ex-Governor Polk, who was also on Price's staff; and Mrs. Colonel Price. To fill out the squad was Mrs. Price's little son, about six years of age. When Captain Able told me of this assignment I leaned against a post and tried to picture in my mind just how high I would be

hanged when I was captured by the Federals, as I was almost certain to be if I undertook to escort so many through the lines now that I was so well known to the authorities. However, the prominence of the ladies' husbands in the Rebel army and the fact that they were staunch friends of mine left me no alternative but to make the attempt, even though it cost me my life.

I told Captain Able I would see the ladies at dinner, an hour usually set by me when I could so arrange it. I was on time and the ladies seemed to me an entire brigade of calico as I thought of escorting them through the lines. They asked me many questions as to how we were to go through, but I was unable to answer them as we had to wait until some opportunity should present itself. I insisted that they must be ready to go at a moment's warning, day or night, when I should call for them.

Next morning as I was passing along the street I walked by the big Overton Hotel, which had been converted into a Federal hospital. A fine new ambulance, drawn by a splendid team of black horses, drove up and stopped in front of the building. On the seat of the ambulance were a driver and a surgeon, both wearing the uniform of the United States army. The surgeon got out and requested the driver to "bring that box up to the third floor." The driver removed his blue overcoat and laid it on the seat, went around to the rear of the ambulance, and taking the box of medicine on his shoulder, entered the building, leaving the ambulance and team unguarded. As soon as he entered the door I jumped to the seat, donned the overcoat, and drove off to Captain Able's house. The ladies, according to request, were ready to go, and in

ten minutes' time they were loaded into the ambulance with their baggage and my mail. We started south over the Hernando road and when we reached the Federal pickets I told the lieutenant in charge that these were Rebel women who had been banished from Memphis and that I had been ordered to take them to the first house beyond the lines and drop them there. I was wearing the Federal overcoat and the ambulance had a big "U. S." on each side, so he naturally supposed that I was telling the truth and permitted us to pass. After we reached the first house, which was about three-quarters of a mile beyond the picket post, I used the whip and the horses made good time down the road toward Dixie.

Before we reached the Yocona River we stopped at a big plantation house owned and occupied by Mrs. Warfield. There we met Mrs. Daniel W. Bell, afterwards Mrs. Erastus Wells of St. Louis, who was a sister of Mrs. Warfield. We spent a very pleasant night with them and next day proceeded to cross the Yocona River. The river was very high and the bottom lands were overflowed for nearly a mile beyond its banks. Before reaching the ferryboat our ambulance was stalled on a submerged stump in about two and a half feet of water. There seemed but one way to extricate ourselves from this dilemma and that was for me to take the ladies, one by one, on my back and carry them to a little dry knoll about a hundred yards away. I carried Mrs. Price and then Mrs. Taylor safely to the knoll, leaving Miss Polk until the last. The little boy remained in the rig. Miss Polk was a little heavier than the other ladies and she clung so tightly round my neck that she was about to choke me. In order to rest a moment and to

get my breath I backed up to a log, one end of which stuck above the water a foot or so. When I tried to stand Miss Polk on the log it turned over backward and we went with it, she holding fast to my neck. We both went under the water, but were not hurt and soon waded out. We presented a very funny sight and the other ladies thoroughly enjoyed our mishap.

I waded back to the ambulance and soon had it ready to move, drove over to the knoll for the ladies, and we were on our way, wet but happy. We crossed the river on the ferry in safety and soon reached General Bowen's headquarters about twelve miles west of Grenada, Mississippi. Here we met our First Missouri Regiment, whose members were nearly all acquainted with the ladies I had brought through the lines. They gave us a rousing welcome and I delivered to them hundreds of letters from home. The United States ambulance was hailed with wild cheers. We remained there overnight and then went on to Grenada, where the ladies joyfully greeted their husbands and Miss Cornelia was restored to her father. We were greeted by the soldiers with great applause as we drove into camp in our United States ambulance. The men carried me about on their shoulders and gave me a great ovation. I was given one thousand dollars in greenbacks for the ambulance and team and it was used by the Confederate troops. In this camp I distributed some two thousand letters I had brought from Missouri and Kentucky.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RUNNING THE VICKSBURG BLOCKADE

AFTER my trip through the lines to Grenada with the three ladies in a United States government ambulance I was much desired by the Federal authorities, even more so than I had anticipated, as they offered a reward of one thousand dollars for my capture dead or alive and delivery to the authorities in St. Louis. I could not conceive wherein the accomplishment of this desire would promote my welfare, therefore I took all the mail on hand and left for Louisville. Reaching there on January 3, 1863, I made my home with Mrs. Buckner and her daughters, the Misses White, of whom I have written heretofore.

My partner, Bob Loudon, came down from Chicago and as he was not in any hurry we concluded to rest a few days and in the meantime try to do the Yanks any mischief that opportunity might afford. Later we decided to go to Grenada and appoint ourselves a special committee to welcome President Davis and General Lee to Grenada and the western army, which was in camp there. They were due to arrive there on January 14. Unfortunately, we delayed our departure a day too long, for the train we were on was derailed about fifty miles below Jackson, Tennessee, and my left shoulder was dislocated. We had to stay at the little town for three days. The entire population seemed to be interested in my welfare and from morning until night we were scarcely an hour with-



out visitors. We dared not both leave our room at the same time for fear some inquisitive knowledge-seeker would investigate our baggage.

We went to Memphis and after spending one night there we hired a livery rig (a small carriage having two seats and a driver) to take us to Hernando, where I had left my mule and my buggy more than a month previous in the care of friends. We went to their house on the outskirts of the town to get our dinner. The owner, Mrs. Smithton, was a widow, who had a son about fourteen years old. She prepared a nice dinner for us and served it in a middle room. While we were eating I saw two men drive up to the fence in a buggy. They did not stop to hitch their team, but stepped at once over the low fence. One went to the front door and the other started for the rear of the house. I had called Bob's attention to them the moment they drove up to the fence and by the time they were in the yard we understood their business and were ready for them. When one man reached the front door and pushed it open without knocking he found Bob's gun covering his face about a foot from his nose. Bob requested him to elevate his hands, which he obligingly did, and Bob removed his gun from his left pocket.

I fastened the rear door with a small bolt. The man gave a strong lunge against the door and broke it open, falling halfway across the room, his gun in his hand. Before he could rise I covered him with my gun and said: "Drop that gun! I am a Confederate soldier and on our own territory." He dropped his gun to the floor, and we marched both of them to the basement and ordered Henry, Mrs. Smithton's son, to bring us a clothesline and two towels. We

again told the Feds that we were on Southern territory and that if they attempted to give us trouble we would shoot them. We told them we thought they had a surplus of nerve or were short on brains to follow us there and undertake to arrest us or perhaps shoot us at their pleasure.

They understood that we were in dead earnest and were as docile as kittens. There was a large post in the middle of the basement and while Bob with a gun in each hand covered them I made them back up to the post and tied them securely. We tied the towels over their mouths and warned them to keep out of our path in the future. In the meantime Henry was getting my mule and buggy ready to travel. Mrs. Smithton had departed hastily for a neighbor's as soon as the Feds arrived. We instructed the driver who had brought us from Memphis to get away from there as fast as he could, and he was not long in disappearing from view.

I got into my rig with the mail, while Bob drove the one the two government sleuths had used to call upon us. We had no reason to tarry and we made good time, nor stopped to rest until we reached Colonel Robert McCullough's camp on Coldwater River. There we remained overnight with the Second Missouri Cavalry, which was doing outpost duty.

When we related our encounter with the Federal detectives and exhibited the rig they had donated to us as representatives of the Confederate government you should have heard the yells that emanated from that bunch of Rebel soldiers. We had eighty letters for the boys in this camp. They always had a large mail ready to send as we passed north through their camp, which was directly on the main state road from

Grenada to Memphis. We spent a very pleasant night with them and by sunrise we were on our way to Grenada. Bob Loudon's new rig was no mean affair—a fine span of horses and a buggy with a shifting seat that was especially adapted to our business of mail-carrying. I gave him my share of the outfit, as I was well provided for with my trusty bay mule and buggy.

We carried with us to Grenada a large amount of mail and a quantity of useful medicines, besides writing materials, which had been presented to us by the good citizens of Louisville and Lexington. These encouraged the soldiers to beg us to get out of camp and hike for Missouri and Kentucky, which we did three days later, on January 24, 1863. Bob went to St. Louis and I went to Louisville, Frankfort, and Lexington. We traveled together in my rig as far as Colonel Selby's home. Miss Emma Selby took Bob's mail to Memphis to Frank Keaton, who forwarded it by Sam Bowen to St. Louis, where Loudon received it.

Miss Amanda Bowen was a great acquisition to the grapevine enterprise, as she could travel free on her brothers' boat. Moreover, she was so accustomed to riding on the boat that no suspicion was created by her frequent trips. She had been banished from Hannibal after her home had been unsuccessfully searched for a Confederate flag she was known to possess. She carried that flag all through the war; sometimes it was wound in her hair, sometimes concealed in her clothing. Each trip she made to Hannibal, Louisiana, and vicinity she delivered and collected mail. She was one of the bravest, most daring of our aides.

I was greeted with open arms by the boys during my stay at Louisville and was most cordially enter-

tained in Lexington by a family named Todd. Mrs. Todd's son, Captain Todd, was in charge of a battery in Breckinridge's Division and was with the troops at Grenada, and I had letters from him to his mother, wife, and sisters. I was kindly treated there, but was informed by a neighbor that Mrs. Todd's house was more closely watched by the Union League than any other Rebel house in Lexington, so I left.

On my arrival in Memphis on February 2, 1863, the steamer *Graham* happened to be there and I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Bowen and her brother, Sam, my old comrade in the Ralls County Rangers. They procured a carriage and took all the mail we had to Hernando, twelve miles below Memphis. That was a happy and memorable day for us as we talked over the early days of the war and also the days when we were children together in Hannibal. During the forties and later, their parents kept a hotel there, called the Bowen House, and my parents had stopped there a few days when I was ten years old.

Since our last visit to the army Colonel McCullough's regiment had gone farther south, and I found the soldiers at Jackson, in pretty good health and spirits after their long rest at Grenada. As on former occasions, my advent in camp was greeted with cheers and congratulations from all, from generals to privates. My happiness and emotions on such occasions overcame me and the tears would fill my eyes in spite of my efforts to conceal them. The army left Jackson about February 7 and camped near Vicksburg. Before leaving Jackson Bob Loudon arrived and afforded the men further cause for rejoicing by bringing mail from the interior and western sections of Missouri. After remaining in camp long enough

for the boys to write all the letters they desired to send, we left them on February 18. We left the army at Grand Gulf on March 29. We took things easy this trip and reached Colonel Selby's, ten miles north-east of Memphis, on April 10. From here Miss Emma Selby took our Kentucky mail to Memphis and there expressed it to Mrs. Nichols, who kept a large hair-dressing establishment in Louisville, while she herself proceeded to St. Louis on the *Graham* with the Missouri mail. She had made two trips prior to this and having made the acquaintance of Sam and Bart Bowen, the captain and pilot, the trip was not monotonous to her.

After our experience in capturing the two detectives at Hernando we deemed it wise to avoid Memphis for a while. Before we reached Centralia Bob decided to go to Kentucky and I wanted to go to Missouri, as I had not been there for several months and was getting homesick to see my sweetheart once more. To enjoy this pleasure I was willing to run all the gauntlets the Yanks could devise to accomplish my defeat and destruction. I was delighted to be in old St. Louis once more. The *Graham* was not due for three days, therefore I had a chance to visit around. Miss Bowen was there. She had been a schoolmate of my fiancée, Miss Glascock, and she arranged for us to meet in Bowling Green on April 21. I was to be there when Miss Glascock arrived and I kept the engagement. When Miss Selby arrived in St. Louis Miss Bowen met her at the landing. I lay in concealment in the city for three days, busily engaged in sorting the mail. Then it was divided up between Misses Elmyra Parker, Lou Venable, Mollie Jamison, Lizzie Pickering, Amanda Bowen, Nellie Woods, Mrs.



Marion W. Vail, Mrs. Deborah Wilson, and myself. This corps of distributors traveled as far as St. Joseph, Kansas City, Sedalia, and Springfield. I had arranged the mail in packages, which were addressed to some prominent person selected by the soldiers in camp, to whom they were delivered by the ladies. The ladies remained at the addressee's home while the men or women of the household delivered the letters. Those that could be individually addressed were enclosed in envelopes, stamped, and mailed. Many had been enclosed in envelopes and stamped before leaving the camps, and these gave us no trouble.

The lady carriers would remain in a town only a few days and all letters received after they departed were mailed to the care of business houses in St. Louis. Kentucky mail was handled in the same way, with Louisville as headquarters. On April 21 I met Miss Glascock according to appointment in Bowling Green. As in all other small towns, the Union League of Bowling Green was much interested in other people's affairs. It was soon noised about among the members that my fiancée was in town and that I must be not far away, so I did not tarry longer in their city. On my way back to St. Louis I called at Troy, Montgomery City, and St. Charles, and gathered up about two hundred and fifty letters. I felt greatly relieved upon reaching St. Louis, as I was much safer there than in a small town, where news travels like wildfire. Two of the ladies came near being arrested, but their written contracts, signed by that noble Roman, Mr. R. S. Scruggs, of the firm of Scruggs, Vandervoort, & Barney of St. Louis, to the effect that they were his authorized agents to sell corsets and hosiery, saved them. On two occasions

telegrams were sent him inquiring as to the veracity of the ladies' statements, but his answers removed suspicion and saved them from arrest or search by the local authorities.

By April 30 the ladies had all returned and they had met with splendid success. We held a conference and decided to abandon hostilities against the Federal government, as things had begun to look strenuous for the grapevine enterprise and for everybody connected with it. One month was the time set for the industry to rest on its oars and very gladly was the decision received. I communicated with Bob through letters written by Mrs. Wilson. He took a trip to Chicago and Detroit and after his return to Louisville we were to meet in Paducah, on May 15.

Before I left St. Louis on May 12 I gave all our mail to Miss Bowen to carry on the *Graham* to Memphis, from which place she and Miss Perdue took it to Colonel Selby's home. Miss Selby had returned home about ten days before I arrived in Paducah on the thirteenth. Bob came in next night with Miss Sudie Kendall. On the fifteenth we left for Dixie, stopping at Colonel Selby's for the Missouri mail. Before arriving at Grenada we learned through the Northern papers that Pemberton's whole army was penned up in Vicksburg by General Grant's troops and we were undecided what to do with the mail we had for them. There were two or three small steamboats running on the Yallabusha and Yazoo rivers to Haines' Bluff, so we went to Yazoo City on the *Dew Drop*, a stern-wheel boat. We learned that our troops were hemmed in at the rear by Grant's troops and by Porter and Foote's fleets of gunboats on the Mississippi River front. For once we felt that we

were checkmated. The night of the twenty-fifth, while Bob and I lay in bed together in a hotel in Yazoo City, we discussed the situation and determined that the two thousand letters we had brought should go into Vicksburg before forty-eight hours or we would die in the attempt. Neither of us had a wink of sleep that night as we lay there planning to run the blockade of the Federal fleet.

After breakfast we went to a tin shop and had four large square boxes made and had the tinner bring his soldering outfit to our room. We packed all our mail in the boxes and soldered them up water-tight. We procured from a fisherman a good, double-ended skiff, pointed at each end like a canoe. We bought an extra pair of new oars and painted them and the boat a light lead color. We then procured two saucepans with long handles, two light dog-chains, some wire and staples, a hammer, and a pair of pliers to cut wire with. Last but by no means least, some ladies prepared a basket of lunch for us. We boarded a steamboat with our outfit that evening and soon arrived at Haines' Bluff, where a large raft of logs had been so arranged as to block the passage of boats either up or down the Yazoo.

On May 25 we wired our mail boxes and stapled them down in the bottom of the boat, two boxes at each end. Near each end, on opposite sides of the boat, we fastened a saucepan by means of a chain and staples. Then we arranged wire loops to stick the oars in so they would not float off or out of the locks. After we had everything in readiness we concluded to make a trial trip in the boat. We stripped off our clothing, fastened the oars inside the boat, and bore down on one side of the boat until it was filled with

water to within three inches of the top. Each of us took a position at one end of the boat and with the saucepans (the handles of which passed through the loops of wire) we could paddle it anywhere we wanted to go, using one hand under water on the saucepan, and holding to the edge of the boat with the other hand. After paddling around awhile we used the saucepans to bail the water out of the boat, then we climbed in and rowed back to where we had left our clothing on the bank. We were delighted with the way our scheme worked.

At six o'clock we bade adieu to Captain Henry and the company of Confederates stationed at Haines' Bluff. "God bless you and see you safe through!" were the captain's parting words to us. It was dark when we reached the Mississippi River to make our start for Vicksburg. That morning I had procured a pair of field glasses and gone on top of the high bluff where I could get a good view of the location of many of the boats of the Federal fleet. Most of the transports were two or three miles above the gunboats and lay along the shore of the left bank. The gunboats lay in about the middle of the stream, slightly nearer to the Vicksburg side. I planned our trip through the fleet accordingly. We kept our boat to the east bank until well past the transports, then we secured our oars inside the skiff and got out into the water with our clothes on.

After we had gone nearly across to the west side, using our saucepans under water as oars, we tipped and sank the boat to within three inches of the top edge and then went on west. The current carried us forward and by the time we were within twenty yards of the west bank we were below the transports

and all other noncombatant craft and immediately abreast of and opposite the gunboats. We found these pretty well spread out across the river, and had to pass within three or four hundred yards of the extreme western gunboat. We were afraid to get in too close to shore as we might attract the attention of the camp guards there. Three of the boats kept their lights moving all the time, and we did not dare use the saucepans too vigorously for fear our speed might attract attention to us. Our boat, sunk low in the water, presented little to arrest the eye of a lookout, but every little flash of light from those eight or ten gunboats made us expect an unfriendly bullet. Although it seemed a long time to us, I think it was really not more than an hour from the time we reached the danger line until we were beyond reach of the searchlights of the gunboats. We now employed the saucepans to bail out the skiff and soon were riding in it. Later we lighted our small, waterproof dark-lantern and headed across the river for the Vicksburg wharf. It was more than a mile across, and every few moments we waved our lantern to let the guards know that we intended to land in Vicksburg, and were not trying to run their blockade. Although it was midnight when we landed, at least fifty soldiers were waiting on the wharf to receive us.

The two guards said they would take good care of our boat and its precious contents until morning. We were then conducted to a rooming-house, where we were provided with night clothes while the folks in the house took our wet clothing and had it dry for us by six o'clock next morning. The news of our arrival in Vicksburg spread rapidly over the town, and when we stepped out of the house we found more than two



hundred soldiers around the place. The crowd was composed mostly of Missouri and Kentucky soldiers whom we knew. We were simply crushed in their excited joy to see us once more and under such unfavorable circumstances and surroundings. They carried us about on their shoulders and cheered lustily. Many of them went with us to our boat and got the mail boxes. We had a tinner unsolder them carefully in order that we might use them to carry mail out of Vicksburg. I shall not attempt to describe the reception we had when we reached the Missouri and Kentucky sections of the camp. It would be impossible. However, all our vain ambitions, the glory of our perilous trip through the fleet, and the pleasure we had in the meeting were soon reversed when we were shown a list of the dear, heroic comrades who had been sacrificed at Port Gibson, Grand Gulf, Baker's Creek, and in the vicinity of Vicksburg since we had bade them such a happy farewell at the camp at Grand Gulf a little more than a month since. Oh, how dreadful the memory of that trip into Vicksburg, though now more than forty years ago! Over two hundred of those happy faces and eager hands that had been extended to receive loving messages from home were to be seen no more. How the joys of the mail-carrier in camp can so quickly be turned into grief and sorrow can scarcely be realized. I felt as if I never wanted to make another trip in the mail-carrying business.

Bob and myself were so grieved that we had about decided to notify the troops that they need not expect us in with any more mail, but when we mentioned the subject to Generals Gates, Cockrell, and Breckinridge and the men in the ranks they cried out in dis-

may at such a proposition. The result was we assured them that we would continue to serve as long as life was in our possession and that thereafter our ghosts would wait upon them in their dreams of home unless the Yanks detained us involuntarily. Shame on us to think of deserting them! But the sad faces and down-hearted expressions of those noble men, coupled with the absence of hundreds whom we were accustomed to meet and render happy with letters, made our existence miserable and we felt as if we must get out of that horrid place as soon as possible.

We had been so interested in getting into Vicksburg that we had laid no plans for getting out. However, we were not long planning a way north. We borrowed General Cockrell's field glasses and spent two or three hours on the bluff at the north end of the fortification. We decided that instead of floating south we would row north, whence we had come. We discovered that for a long way below where the transports lay and as far down as the gunboats there were skiffs, launches, and other small craft rowing and moving freely about between points where camps were established along the canal some distance back from the river. I knew that with two good sets of oars we could make fair time upstream.

The boys in Vicksburg soon made ready a large return mail for our care and distribution. It filled our four boxes as full as they could be packed and we had them soldered as before, water-tight. Instead of wiring the boxes inside the skiff, as we had brought them down, we turned the boat bottom up on the bank and wired the boxes in a row, end to end, to the bottom of the boat. The boxes were a foot wide, eighteen inches long, and eight inches deep. We put them un-

derneath the boat so that in the event we passed any boat or persons on the bank they would find nothing inside the boat. Before starting we exchanged our clothing for Federal uniforms, which were plentiful in our camp. One of the saddest good-byes I ever expect to undergo in all my life took place in the trenches, in the camps, and on the wharf at Vicksburg the night previous to our departure.

After our parting with the men, whom we never expected to see again, we slept, or rather we retired, in a house on the levee. At two o'clock in the morning we pulled across the river to the west bank, and keeping in its shadow, as it was a fine starlight night, rowed upstream. By daylight we were directly across from the gunboats, without having received a single challenge from anyone. We were wearing Federal uniforms and our act was such a barefaced exhibition of lunacy and nerve that no one on the fleet suspected our character as we rowed up past the transports in full view and not more than a hundred yards from the boats of the fleet.

We rowed on up the western shore until we passed around a point three or four miles above the fleet. Here we landed and pulling our boat out of the water removed the mail boxes from the bottom, as they made it so much harder to row. Oh, what a relief to our overtaxed muscles, as well as our nerves and minds! We rested a short time and then launched our boat and made fine time rowing upstream. By one o'clock we were in the mouth of the Yazoo River, having been absent just six days. We received a hearty welcome from Captain Henry and our men at Haines' Bluff.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NAVAL OPERATIONS AND A PROJECT THAT WENT AWRY

WE left Haines' Bluff in the steamer *Dew Drop* for Grenada. General Loring and Captain James Russell, the latter a St. Louis and New Orleans pilot whom I had known since boyhood, were on the boat. It was almost impossible to get pilots for the Confederate service, and they prevailed upon me to promise that when I returned from carrying the Vicksburg mail north I would go with them as pilot on the *Prince of Wales*, which steamer was to go into service in the Confederate navy at Fort Pemberton.

At Grenada we took a train for Senatobia, to which point I had ordered my bay mule and buggy sent. It took that mule but one day to carry Bob and me to Colonel Selby's home near Memphis. Miss Emma Selby drove into Memphis and brought Miss Annie Baker to us to carry the mail to St. Louis. I had to hurry back to pilot the *Prince of Wales* at Fort Pemberton. Miss Baker went north on the steamer *Platte Valley* with our old friend, Captain William C. Postal of Memphis. Bob had arranged for Mrs. Deborah Wilson and Miss Lou Venable to meet Miss Baker at the wharf in St. Louis when the *Platte Valley* arrived. I had some mail for Paducah and vicinity, so I stopped there one day at Mr. Emerson's, to whose home I had been directed by a Confederate lieutenant in Vicksburg, and he took charge of the distribution of the mail.

Now I must add more hours of grief and distress to my chapter of sorrow at Vicksburg. Those five hundred or more Kentucky mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts whose hearts and homes I had so often gladdened with letters from their absent men were not only doomed to disappointment but to grief and mourning. The blood of their dear ones had stained the battlefields of Port Gibson, Black River, Grand Gulf, Baker's Creek, and Vicksburg, and their bodies had been deposited in shallow ditches without coffins, or wrappings of any kind. My meetings with those sad people were too sacred for me to describe. After my experiences at Louisville I could not summon courage to carry the sad news to those awaiting me in Lexington and Frankfort, and I therefore prevailed upon Mrs. Ferguson and Mrs. Thompson to take the mail to those cities.

On the tenth of June, 1863, I left Louisville for Fort Pemberton, where I waited for Bob Loudon. When he arrived I was on the *Prince of Wales*. He was not only willing but anxious to repeat the trip through the Federal fleet into Vicksburg and did successfully make the trip alone. When he left Vicksburg, however, instead of rowing north through the fleet he floated down the river and landed safely a few miles below the city and then went back north by land.

When I arrived at Fort Pemberton the Federal fleet was making preparations to go from the Mississippi River into the Tallahatchie by cutting away the trees between the two rivers where the banks were overflowed to a depth of six or eight feet with the water rising rapidly. I was sent as pilot on the *I. M. Sharp* to carry a lot of negroes down the Talla-



busha and Tallahatchie rivers for the purpose of cutting down trees and blockading the way of the Federal boats through the woods. When we reached Greenwood, at the junction of these two rivers, the Confederates were beginning to build the breastworks of Fort Pemberton, at which point they intended to engage the Federal gunboats if they should succeed in getting that far.

I was transferred from the *I. M. Sharp* to the large St. Louis & New Orleans passenger steamer *Prince of Wales*, which was more than three hundred feet long. There were about five hundred negroes on the boat. We had a very trying time with the big steamer in the Tallahatchie River, which is a very crooked stream. We went about twenty miles up this river and tied the boat to a tree. The negroes, carrying axes, started toward the Mississippi for the purpose of cutting trees to form the blockade. They had been gone about two hours when we heard a frightful yelling and splashing as if Bedlam had been turned loose and was running full speed. The negroes came hustling back to the steamer, accompanied by a squad of soldiers, and announced that the Federal gunboats were coming. We took them all on board and with much difficulty turned the big boat around and started down river at a rapid gait. At every crook and turn we left ten to twenty feet of the "gingerbread work" of our steamer on the trees along the bank, and by the time we reached Greenwood very little was left of the steamer's upper works, but no damage had been done to the cabin or machinery and her traveling ability was unimpaired. We anchored at the site of Fort Pemberton, around in the Yazoo

River, where an army of two or three thousand Confederates was engaged in throwing up breastworks.

On the second day one of the Federal gunboats appeared near the fort, but General Loring and Commander Brown had a large ocean steamer, the *Star of the West*, taken around into the Tallahatchie to the point where it touched the fort, and scuttled it there, thus preventing any gunboat from passing that point. Two of the Federal gunboats came down the Tallahatchie as far as the point where the *Star of the West* had been scuttled, and opened fire on Fort Pemberton. After a two-day siege the gunboats retired up the Tallahatchie and returned to the Mississippi through the submerged woods. We heard a rumor that the Federal gunboats planned to go up the Yazoo River past Haines' Bluff. Commodore Brown of our Yazoo River navy fitted up the large steamer *Magenta* as a gunboat by barricading her in every conceivable way with bales of cotton. I was placed on the *Magenta* to pilot her up the Yazoo, but she was not equal to a battle with the Federal gunboats, so she was soon abandoned and laid up about twenty miles above Yazoo City, where Commodore Brown and his staff established themselves.

We began laying torpedoes made of very large demijohns filled with glycerine and giant powder in many places from the landing at Yazoo City to a point a mile and a half below the city. Wires were attached to these torpedoes and fastened to the shore. The second morning after we completed this work the *De Kalb*, one of the finest gunboats of the Federal fleet, rounded the point at the lower end of the city. Her flags were flying gaily and her band struck up the *Star-Spangled Banner*. At this moment she

passed directly over one of our demijohn mines and Commodore Brown pulled the wire. In a few seconds her head went down like a diving duck and her stern went up in the air, and that was the finish of the *De Kalb*. Immediately behind her were transports that picked up many of the men, but one hundred or more were drowned before they could be rescued. Later the Feds began to land troops at Yazoo City, but we took ourselves out of town in double-quick time and went back to Fort Pemberton.

General Loring had his headquarters in Greenwood. I held a consultation with him and Commodore Brown regarding a project to send supplies into Vicksburg, as it was rumored that the men penned in there were starving. General Loring sent me to lay my plan before General Joe Johnston. I proposed to go to Memphis and capture a steamer that was loaded with provisions intended for the Federal army and run her through the Federal fleet to Vicksburg. General Johnston gave me an order on Colonel McCullough of the Second Missouri Cavalry to furnish me twenty-five picked men for this hazardous mission. Colonel McCullough was in command of one of the outposts on Coldwater Creek, twenty-five miles south of Memphis. I stayed all night in his camp and early next morning started with my twenty-five men, crossed the Wolf River, and stayed that night at Colonel Selby's, about ten miles northeast of Memphis. Next morning I went into the city. I had many acquaintances there and I soon arranged for places for my men, divided into groups of from four to eight, to stay. They were disguised as railroad laborers, and by the second day I had them safe inside the city.

The steamer *Luminary*, a large passenger and freight boat, landed at the wharf. She had on board more than nine hundred tons of commissary stores for General Grant's army—the very prize we desired. I was acquainted with the mate of the *Luminary*, Wash Corbin, and also with the pilots, who were Southern men. On board the steamer, returning to their posts, were half a dozen Federal officers and some eighteen or twenty soldiers who had been at home on leave. It would have been dead easy to capture them at meal time. I managed to get half of my command on board as deck hands and deck passengers and it was easy to get the others aboard on various pretexts. However, before I left General Joe Johnston he had strictly enjoined me in the event of receiving reliable information that Vicksburg had surrendered, immediately to abandon my undertaking and get the men safely back to their command, as they would certainly be executed if captured by the Federals.

We had everything ready to start for Vicksburg with our boatload of provisions, when on the morning of July 6 the steamer *G. H. Wilson* arrived from down the river with a large canvas sign tacked around her hurricane deck rail announcing the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4! The *Luminary* was to leave Memphis at five o'clock that evening, so I had but a short time to get my men off the boat, but I accomplished the feat without the loss or arrest of a single man. After dark, with the very material assistance of Miss Annie Perdue, Mollie Noble, and Jennie Rudisell, I managed to get the men safely out of Memphis and back to Colonel Selby's house, and the morning of the third day found us on our way

back to Colonel McCullough's camp on Coldwater Creek.

While in Memphis I had learned that the Feds were buying corn from the farmers near the city. Colonel Selby told me that they had been in his neighborhood and if I did not keep a close watch I might run into some foraging squads before I reached Hernando. The road leading directly south from Colonel Selby's place ran east of Memphis and was the one we had to travel unless we went some distance out of the way. I placed in the lead as picket an unarmed man who was dressed in new clothing. I had another picket follow so as to keep a watch on the first man, and I followed this second picket with the rest of the men, keeping him just in sight.

We had traveled about eight miles in this way when the advance picket signaled us to stop and rode into a field of standing corn. Presently he rode back to us and said he had found two four-horse wagons, manned by two Federal drivers, two helpers, and four guards, gathering corn. He had told the Feds that he lived two miles back up the road and would sell them a field of corn if they would come to see him the next day. They agreed, and said they would come when they finished the field they were working on. Stock laws were in force and there were no division fences. We rode parallel to the road some distance back in the corn until we reached the foraging squad and then we charged on them. I ordered the men to fire one shot each into the air as they circled the party, who did not discover us until we were almost upon them. When I demanded their surrender one Fed said: "Surrender!—who do you think is going to fight a whole regiment?" We disarmed them and



commanded all but the two drivers to get into the rear wagon, when we lost no time getting away from that vicinity. We made about ten miles an hour down the road until we reached Hernando, where we received a big ovation and were tendered a dinner at the hotel by the citizens. The dinner party included our captives, who accepted the situation in good spirit and acknowledged that we had made a grand coup on them. I think General Grant did not feel more elation over the capture of Vicksburg than we did over those eight Federals, twelve good horses, army wagons, four repeating Winchesters, eight revolvers, and four sets of double harness. Some of the men had watches and money, but their personal belongings were not confiscated by us.

When we drove into Colonel McCullough's camp that night there was no rest, as we were kept busy telling of our experiences since we had left the camp some twelve days before. Old Colonel Bob, after looking over the swag, remarked in his gruff manner, "Grimes, I think you had better take your gang and two or three more men and see if you cannot bring in the town!" Next morning after breakfast Colonel Bob paroled the eight men and sent four soldiers with them to protect them until they reached Hernando, to which town they were sent in a wagon.

That capture went a long way toward soothing our disappointment in not carrying out my scheme to take the *Luminary* to Vicksburg. We lost but one man, who deserted while in Memphis. While the men were away Colonel McCullough paced the camp and often said, "That crazy daredevil will get every one of my men hung!" but when we returned in safety with our captives he was happy clear through.

I went to General Johnston's headquarters at Macon, via Yazoo City, where I met Mrs. Marion W. Vail and Mrs. Welsh and her daughter (afterwards Mrs. E. C. Simmons of Westmoreland Place, St. Louis). I was to escort the two latter ladies to Georgia. Mrs. M. E. A. McLure was also in Yazoo City, but she did not accompany us. All these ladies had been banished from St. Louis for meddling with the affairs of the United States government. Miss Sue Mellon was also a member of our party, en route to her parents at Macon. We started from Yazoo City in an old prairie schooner driven by a Mississippi darkey. The propelling power consisted of an old gray horse and a blind mule. When we reached Meridian, three days later, the ladies were much fatigued and sore in every joint from the jolting of the wagon.

At Meridian we found two or three thousand of our soldiers camped about the town. We stopped at a new hotel, a two-story house that had not been completed. The partition walls were of pine, unfinished, that did not quite reach to the ceiling in the room where we slept. On account of the presence of so many rough men in the house the ladies were afraid to stay alone and insisted that I occupy a cot in their room. Next morning about daylight some men in the adjoining room heard their voices, and being descendants of old Adam they could not resist the temptation to investigate. They climbed up on a couple of chairs and peeped over the partition. A dozen Comanche Indians could scarcely have equaled the wild yells that Miss Sue Mellon and Miss Garaphelia Welsh sent forth! They scared the men so badly that I heard them fall off the chairs to the floor and the whole

affair ended in an uproarious round of laughter on both sides of the partition.

Mrs. Marion Wall Vail was one of the most energetic of all my assistants in the mail-carrying business. Her enthusiasm for the Southern cause knew no bounds and she was finally banished from St. Louis by Provost Marshal Broadhead. She was happy anywhere and made herself useful at the hospitals, or wherever she was needed. Her husband had long before been given his choice of leaving St. Louis or joining the home guards. Neither prescription seemed to agree with him, but finally Mrs. Vail persuaded him to join the guards, retain his position, and provide for their two children. Before long he obtained permission for his wife to return to Missouri with the proviso that he keep her fifty or more miles from St. Louis. She went to a farm they owned near Pendleton, and I escorted her from Demopolis, Alabama, to Memphis on her return trip. I had known her nearly all my life. Dear Aunt Wall! Until the day of her death at the age of eighty-two years she never realized that the war was over, as her spirit of patriotism and warm love for the South never waned and she was fond of relating war stories in her interesting way to her many friends of all ages. She was popular with young people as well as with older ones, and was a welcome guest in a large number of homes. She never grew feeble, but continued active until within a few weeks of her death in 1907. She was an ardent member of the Third Baptist Church of St. Louis and was a helpful, idolized teacher of a large class of young men. She was also a loved and valued member of the M. A. E. McLure Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

After reaching Major Mellon's headquarters in Macon with the ladies, I went with Mrs. Welsh and her daughter to Thomas, Georgia, and then returned to Macon, where I met General Johnston. I gave him an account of our experiences, in which he seemed very much interested. He laughed heartily when I told him of our capture of the Federal foragers. He commended me highly and said he had no doubt that I would have succeeded in landing the *Luminary* at Vicksburg, adding that the exploit would have ranked among the most notable feats of the entire war. In bidding me adieu he said he might call upon me again ere long. He complimented me so highly that I was really quite vain and imagined I could easily accomplish any task he might assign me. I then spent some time carrying dispatches for General Johnston to the outposts.





## CHAPTER X.

### A MARRIAGE THAT WAS NOT CELEBRATED

FROM Breckinridge's command near Chattanooga I collected a large mail for Louisville, Lexington, and Frankfort, and various other points in Kentucky. I left Meridian on July 28 on the steamer *Marengo* on the Tombigbee River and arrived at the parole camps of the Missouri and Kentucky troops at Demopolis, Alabama. I was indeed glad to meet the boys once more. I learned that Robert Loudon had gone into Vicksburg with his mail all safe and had not been heard from since leaving there for Missouri on August 3. After four days in this camp with the few who remained of my old Company K, I bade them adieu and took with me a large number of letters, but not nearly as many as I had carried on previous occasions.

I arrived in Louisville on August 10 and put up at Mrs. Nichols' home, where, with the aid of Mrs. Buckner and her daughters, she arranged the mail. Mrs. Buckner took the Lexington and Frankfort mail, as I was informed that the Union League people of those cities were anxious to make my acquaintance. Mrs. Buckner was intimately acquainted in both cities and her appearance there created no special attention. During this stay I visited her and her daughters, the mother and sisters of Jesse N. White, but oh, how different the circumstances of this visit from the first one I had made there! I brought no letter from Jesse, but had letters from two of their neighbors that con-

veyed the heart-rending news that their son and brother had fallen, mortally wounded, at Baker's Creek and died soon after being removed to the hospital tent. I had not courage enough to tarry in homes overwhelmed by distress by letters I had carried, so I left Louisville upon Mrs. Buckner's return.

I went to St. Louis, where I remained one day, returning on the steamer *Graham*. I went on board about eight o'clock at night (August 18) and had no trouble whatever in being assigned to the same room I had occupied on two former trips, as that apartment (the deck) was ample for the accommodation of about one hundred passengers. Deck passengers had to find their food as best they could, but on this trip I was in luck, for Miss Perdue and Miss Amanda Bowen were returning south on the same boat. Regularly each afternoon I found it convenient to spend most of my time on the stern of the boat. Miss Bowen would have the steward send a lunch to her room for herself and Miss Perdue. Miss Bowen would then tie the lunch up securely in a paper and stroll out to the rear guards to view the scenery from the stern of the boat, in the rear of the ladies' cabin. In that position she was standing directly above me. When no one was watching she would drop the coveted package, which I caught with all the dexterity of a professional ball player. Miss Bowen was careful to see that this custom was not overlooked and I was well fed. She managed to ingratiate herself into the good will of the government agent on the *Graham* and that individual paid little or no attention to her male associates who traveled on the boat. How lucky to be born a woman, provided she does not render herself unlucky by her choice of a man to take care of her!

On our arrival in Memphis I made haste to Frank Keaton's rooms over his boat store. The ladies got a one-horse carriage and I was toggged up as driver and we had no trouble passing out of Memphis, as martial law was now a thing of the past there. From Hernando the ladies returned to Memphis, while I got my big bay mule and buggy and drove to Holly Springs, where I took a train to Demopolis.

I was heartily welcomed by the camp and had letters from home for about two-thirds of the men. I found Mrs. M. W. Vail, Mrs. Margaret McLure, and Miss Susie Mellon stopping at the home of Major Whitfield, about two miles from town. He was about seventy years of age. His wife was a beautiful, accomplished woman of thirty. The daughter of his first wife, aged seventeen, Miss Bessie, was one of the most lovable girls I ever had the pleasure of meeting and, but for the fact that my heart was already in the keeping of another, Miss Whitfield would have had no trouble in securing me—heart, body, and soul—in as short a period as she chose to mention.

The major owned about two hundred negroes. He had sent a number of them to New Orleans and other places to be taught trades—carpentry, brick and stone masonry, glass-blowing—in short, all branches of the building trades. They were proficient in all these trades and they had built the large colonial mansion that he occupied. There was no part of it that those negroes did not make—even to the large chandeliers that hung from the ceilings. The house had four separate porches, one on each side. Notwithstanding the fact that Major Whitfield was a retired army officer, having served in the War of 1812 and in the Mexican War, and that he took no

active part in the Civil War, his house was later burned to the ground by General Sherman's troops. Life is too short to comment on this atrocious deed.

Next day I escorted Mesdames Vail and McLure and Misses Sue Mellon and Bessie Whitfield out to the camp to take dinner with my comrades of Company K, First Missouri Cavalry. Generals Gates and Cockrell had also been invited. If I was ever more surprised, or ever saw a more bountiful dinner than they gave us, I have no recollection of it. The menu included large roasted turkeys, great quantities of fried chicken and baked red snapper, besides numerous other dishes. To the end of my life I shall never forget the scene, as about twenty-five of us stood around that long table with General Elijah Gates at one end and General Frank M. Cockrell at the other. On one side stood our beloved Captain William Eller with Miss Mellon on one side of him and Miss Whitfield on the other. Mrs. Vail stood at General Cockrell's right, Mrs. McLure on General Gates' right, while I stood on General Cockrell's left, as the boys had arranged. General Cockrell, with his right hand raised toward heaven, asked a fervent blessing on all that was set before us and for all who had been spared to the Missouri army by the mercies of the blessed Saviour. At the conclusion of this ceremony either handkerchief or coat sleeve was raised to tearful eyes. Aunt Wall was the principal spokesman on this occasion and a well-selected entertainer she was. Old Missouri, provost marshals, home guards, Gratiot and Myrtle Street prisons, and the prospects of the Southern Confederacy were the chief topics of conversation. That happy social feast lasted about two hours and a half. We remained in the camp until

sundown and then I escorted the ladies back to Major Whitfield's.

As I have previously stated, Mr. Vail had prevailed upon Provost Marshal Broadhead to permit his wife to return to Missouri, provided she was not within fifty miles of St. Louis. In order to comply with this condition Mr. Vail bought a farm four miles from Pendleton, in Warren County, Missouri. Of this place I will write later, as it was the scene of one of the most thrilling incidents of my war experience. When I left Demopolis I was accompanied by Mrs. Vail, who was returning to Missouri to her children—Cora, aged ten, and Owen, aged twelve. We were accompanied by Mrs. Mawze. After passing Grenada we had a hard struggle to reach Memphis, as the Yanks had been altering the railroad according to their devastating plans and specifications, placing it in such condition that it was undesirable for Rebel operation. Missouri mules were the chief motive power and we traveled from Jackson to Memphis on a hand car drawn by a mule. At Memphis I left the ladies and went by a different route to Louisville and St. Louis.

After remaining in St. Louis a few days I went to meet Miss Glascock at the home of her cousin, Mrs. James Allen. While there we made arrangements to meet in Memphis the first week in November and end our long and faithful engagement with a wedding ceremony. General Price had stated that I had gone through the Federal lines so many times that he considered the hazard had become too great and he desired me to remain on the southern side of the line. He agreed that I should have a position in the quartermaster's department and have my bride with me.



This was to be my last trip north. We had many friends in Louisiana and I delivered a great many letters from the Confederate army. There were two entire companies under Captain Tom Carter and Syl Thurman that had been made up in Louisiana and were a part of a regiment commanded by Burbrage and Senseney. Major Senseney was blown to pieces by the explosion of a mine laid by Grant's men and General Frank M. Cockrell was blown skyward by the same explosion, but he was only slightly injured.

I bade my sweetheart farewell and reached St. Louis in safety next day by rail. I had a pleasant visit with the family of Mr. James Ashbrook, a wealthy pork packer and the father of Miss Lizzie Ashbrook, already mentioned as one of my assistants. Miss Lou Venable accepted Miss Amanda Bowen's invitation to take a trip to Memphis with her on the *Graham*, and they carried my Louisville and Kentucky mail. I wanted to go at the same time, but was afraid to trust the government detective on the *Graham* too often, therefore I went by train to Cairo and German-town and back to Memphis on the Charleston Railroad, where I waited two days for the mail to be brought to me by Miss Jennie Rudisell of Memphis. She arrived on the fifteenth and I reached Demopolis on my third trip on September 20. I found the Confederates in fine health and highly elated over the fact that they had all been exchanged a few days before my arrival. They were anticipating a change somewhere and it did not seem to matter much where they were ordered so long as they could not go in freedom to their homes and loved ones. After five days I started north to meet my fiancée in Memphis,

as we had planned. Little did I dream that this farewell to the boys in camp would be the last one.

On my arrival in St. Louis, October 2, I made my home with Mrs. Wise, the mother of Miss Lou Venable. After two days' preparation the whole grapevine force started out west and northwest. I went on my usual route to Louisville, reaching there October 8, 1863. As the Missouri and Kentucky troops had been in no battles during my last three trips I bore no very bad tidings. On this trip I was accompanied by Mrs. Buckner to Frankfort, Kentucky.

At Louisville I met my partner, Robert Loudon. The government authorities were hot on his trail. Several fine St. Louis and New Orleans steamboats that were chartered by the government had been burned recently and Bob was the man they suspected of being responsible for the deeds. Appearances were very much against him and he had to stay in hiding. Bob's eyes were rather prominent—"pop-eyes"—and he was easily recognized by his description. He had not been doing much in the mail business, having made but one trip since his last trip through the Federal fleet into Vicksburg. When he left Vicksburg he was my guest on the *Prince of Wales* during the Fort Pemberton fiasco. I stayed with him for a few days and then went to St. Joseph, Missouri, for mail. From there I traveled over the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad to Quincy, Illinois. Before I left St. Louis I had arranged for Miss Lou Venable to accompany Miss Bowen on a round trip to Memphis, leaving St. Louis ten days after my departure for St. Joseph, and they were to carry all the mail to Frank Keaton. During my stay at St. Joseph all arrangements were completed to meet my fiancée

in Memphis on November 15. Captain Wesley Parker was at that time in command of the steamer *Iatan* plying between St. Louis and New Orleans, and his son, James H. Parker, was one of the pilots. My sweetheart was an intimate friend of Captain Parker's family and was visiting at his home, accompanied by her sister Betty. When the *Iatan* left St. Louis they were aboard and when they reached Memphis they went to the home of Miss Rudisell.

After leaving Quincy I hastened on to Memphis and on November 5 met the girls at Miss Rudisell's home. We feared trouble if we were married in Memphis, as I dared not reveal my identity to the Federal authorities, and so we arranged to meet at Hernando next day. I spent the evening with Miss Lucy and her sister. Fearing the Union League might learn that we were there and imprison the whole party, I decided to lodge elsewhere. I took George Jones, a neighbor's boy, with me to Frank Keaton's store to help me with my baggage, which consisted of two big valises full of Rebel mail, up to the Seay House, where I engaged a room and stayed overnight. I had as a roommate a Federal lieutenant! I had breakfast and dinner at the hotel and then went up to Miss Rudisell's to call on the girls. Miss Jennie informed me that they had gone to call on Miss Annie Perdue and would return at five o'clock. As it was near that hour I decided to wait for them.

After a few minutes I heard the doorbell ring and I did not leave the parlor to hide, as I thought it was the girls entering. Miss Rudisell entered the parlor accompanied by two strange men. She introduced me as Mr. Anderson and remarked that I was the only man in the house. One of the men inquired where

I lived. I said I resided ten miles out in the country. He drew a photograph from his pocket and compared it with my face, remarking that I was not the man they were seeking. I replied in the affirmative to his query as to whether I was acquainted with the premises. They requested me to show them through the house, as they wanted to examine each room. I directed them and then we returned to the parlor. They were on the point of leaving when one asked if I had any objection to accompanying them to Colonel Bradley's headquarters; they had instructions to search the house for a man named Keener and as I was the only man they had found they thought best for me to go with them to Colonel Bradley, the provost marshal of Memphis.

We started down the street. At the first corner we turned I saw coming directly toward me my sweetheart and her sister. They smiled at sight of me, but I shook my head warningly. They immediately ignored me and when we met on the sidewalk Miss Betty passed between me and one of the detectives. I succeeded in handing her my diary containing valuable papers so quickly that it was unnoticed by the detectives. I still have that diary at the present time.

Upon arrival at Colonel Bradley's office I was introduced as Brady Anderson, a farmer living ten miles out of town, and I was then questioned by Colonel Bradley. Several ladies and gentlemen were sitting in his office at the time. A man named Thompson, a citizen of St Louis, with whom I was acquainted, stepped up to the desk just as Colonel Bradley had dismissed me and said, "Colonel Bradley, do you not know who this man is?" "He says his name is Anderson, that is all I know about him." Thompson said:

“Well, this is Ab Grimes, the Rebel mail-carrier, who has made several escapes from various prisons and been condemned once. There is a big reward offered for his capture!” Bradley was much surprised and said: “So you are Ab Grimes, are you? I have heard of you frequently and am powerful glad to make your acquaintance. You will fill the bill much better than Keener, the man I was hunting.” After hard grilling for an hour I was taken to the Irving Block prison. That prison was on the west side of Jackson Square in Memphis and consisted of three large brick stores built together—three stories high. A pair of stairs led from the lower storeroom into the basement, where there was an excavated doorway leading into the yard. This doorway had boards nailed over it, and one wide board was off about three feet above the ground.

When I was placed in this cellar a ball with a chain about three feet long was riveted to my right ankle and one end of the chain was stapled to the floor. There were eighteen other prisoners chained to the floor in like manner, placed in a row from the front to the rear of the long cellar. I was chained next to a big stove and next to a man named Pete Needham. When he was arrested he had a box of shoe blacking in his pocket. One night he covered his face with the blacking, and loosening the chain from the floor made a dash for the rear door where the board was off. There was no guard at the door and he made his way into the yard and escaped. I decided to try the same game the next night. I worked the staple in my chain loose from the floor and when the guard was at the front end of the cellar I started for the opening in the door. Unknown to me, a guard had been placed



outside the doorway after Needham's escape. Just as I was about to go through the guard jabbed a bayonet at me and it caught me under the chin, in the neck, giving me a severe flesh wound. He snapped the trigger at the same time, but the charge failed to explode. My escape from death was miraculous! I ran back to my place with the blood streaming from my chin. The bayonet had cut through my tongue into the roof of my mouth. The guard who had stopped me gave the alarm and in a few minutes a lieutenant came down with some other officers. I was taken upstairs and a doctor examined the wound, which did not prove to be very serious. I was taken back to the cellar and again chained to the floor. No treatment whatever was given the wound.

Among the prisoners was a big fellow who weighed about two hundred pounds. He was a Federal soldier who had been imprisoned for stealing government mules out of the corral and selling them. One night I managed to get a leg off the stove and succeeded in making a hole through the brick wall near my bed into the adjoining cellar. The fat man tried to go through the hole, but stuck fast. Before he could crawl back the guard caught him. A rope was procured and his feet were made fast in one cellar and his arms and shoulders were tied in the other cellar. He was kept tied in that position for two whole days and the poor man's sufferings were intense. I remained here more than two weeks and my daily fare consisted of two stale crackers and a piece of rotten bacon and some water, or coffee made of beans and dried Cherokee rose leaves. The Federal government was not celebrated for feeding the Rebel prisoners.

The night I was placed in the cellar I selected a

guard I thought I could trust and who I thought might favor me. He was Henry Brunner, of the Sixteenth Indiana Regiment. I told him I had just been married and had brought my wife from St. Louis two days before, and that our furniture had preceded us, as we intended to go to housekeeping. I said I wanted to let her know where the furniture was stored and asked him if he would take a note to her that would give her the name of a little boy (George Jones) who was with me when I stored the furniture, in order that she might get it and go to housekeeping. That was what I wrote in the note I asked Brunner to carry to her. The "furniture" was the large Rebel mail which I had brought from St. Louis and left in the room I occupied with the Federal lieutenant at the Seay House the morning of my capture. When Henry Brunner brought the note to my sweetheart she and her sister invited him to supper, entertained him with music, and showed him a great deal of attention, and he was soon "on our staff." The girls were very careful not to drop any information and next day they hunted up the little boy, George Jones, and he told them he had been with me when I engaged a room at the Seay House. They knew then that I had left the mail there. Miss Rudisell was well acquainted with the proprietor and she told him that I was at her house ill and she had come to pay my bill and get my baggage. He gave her the two valises, which contained about four thousand letters for the Rebel army. A few days later the girls managed to send them through the lines by Misses Mollie Noble and Bertie Smith, and they were distributed to the Missouri and Kentucky troops at Meridian.

I had Brunner keep watch for the steamer *Iatan*,

and when it returned from New Orleans he hired a carriage and took the girls to the wharf. Thus they left in safety to return to their home in Missouri. I was greatly relieved when Henry told me they were safe on their way up the Mississippi, as I feared they would be arrested and cast into the Irving Block prison in the room adjoining mine, which was in use for female prisoners.

Thus ended all my fond hopes and anticipations of the near future and I did not see my sweetheart again until seven months later. After I had been in Irving Block prison for some time I was taken before Colonel Bradley. When I entered his office Miss Annie Perdue, one of the most enthusiastic Rebels in Tennessee and one of my most efficient mail distributors, was sitting in the room. We did not show any signs of recognition. After a few moments the officers present made various excuses to leave the room, leaving us alone together. We were sure they were watching us, desiring to learn if we were accomplices. In my possession was a white handkerchief with a border of red floss that had been embroidered by Miss Perdue. It had her full name worked across one corner. She knew I had it and made a sign for me to give it to her. The officers immediately ran into the room and the men were ordered by Bradley to search both of us. I had the handkerchief in my hand and while they were searching her clothing I put the corner containing her name into my mouth and with my teeth tore it off and swallowed it. The men were so intent on searching her they did not notice me. Miss Perdue was released as there was no evidence against her. I was taken back to my location in the cellar and again chained securely to the floor.

Shortly after this I was placed in charge of Captain W. W. Clark and three guards, put on board the steamer *Liberty*, and conveyed to Cairo, where we took a train for East St. Louis. En route I wired my mother, who was at my sister's home at Lebanon, Illinois, to meet me in Lebanon, as I had not seen her since the war began in May, 1861. Through some misunderstanding she did not meet me and I was greatly disappointed. The train stood in East St. Louis two hours and then I was taken to Alton to the penitentiary in use as a Federal prison.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A DUNGEON AND A DEATH SENTENCE

AT five in the afternoon I arrived with Captain Clark and my three guards at the Alton penitentiary. After being turned over to the keeper of the pen I sat in the office about two hours. During that time several doctors came in from the smallpox quarantine across the river from Alton. I was informed that disease was raging among the prisoners. The conversation of the clerk and doctors informed me that seventeen of the men had died that day and there seemed no prospect of checking the epidemic. The clerk said twenty men were ready to be sent over that night to quarantine. That sort of conversation weakened my courage and it was all I could do to remain in my chair. Presently a doctor asked for a carpenter, who was brought into the office. He was informed that three other doctors would be up from St. Louis next day to assist in the dissecting of bodies and requested him to make them two more tables as six were not enough. They asked him to make the new ones more slanting so the blood would run off more rapidly!

The immortal ghost of Hamlet's father loomed up in my mind and I imagined I heard him remark:

“But that I am forbid

To tell the secrets of my prison house,

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word

Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,



Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their  
spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine!"

It did not require the aid of a pair of fieldglasses for me to behold my finish right there! Fortunately a soldier entered and ordered me to follow him and it needed no second invitation to part company with that convention of scientific butchers. I was conducted to the quarters of the Rebel officers, many of whom were my friends. I had supper with them and we had a pleasant time discussing the past. I retired about ten o'clock, but soon afterwards two guards and a lieutenant came in and requested me to change my quarters for more secure ones. I was taken out to the ruins of the old Illinois state penitentiary, where some ninety or a hundred cells still stood intact. I was assigned to one of the cells on the ground floor, locked in, and left alone. There was no bed or bedding. The addition to my welfare was a pair of handcuffs securely locked upon my wrists. I sat on the floor, leaned up against the wall, and sang that old familiar hymn:

"How tedious and tasteless the hours  
When Jesus no longer I see;  
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers  
Have all lost their sweetness to me."

After I tired of singing I found that the room had other occupants besides myself. In a short time ten or twelve large rats entered unannounced through the breaks in the stone flooring and proceeded to make

themselves perfectly at home and to render things unpleasant for me. There is an old saying that "A fool never goes crazy." How fortunate for me that the proverb was applicable in my case or I should have gone demented when those rats began poking their heads through the stone floor, their eyes staring at me like small yellow balls of fire! They took turns at sticking their heads out and darting back. Soon they grew bold and began jumping and running over my legs as I sat on the floor. When I jumped up and made a rush at them they retreated to their holes. In a few minutes they rallied and came at me again. After I had chased them back several times they seemed to know that I could not hurt them and they no longer ran into the holes. Chasing them around the cell soon exhausted me (I was still weak from starvation in the Irving Block prison) and I feared they would attack me. I was virtually at their mercy. After four or five hours I was completely exhausted and could no longer stand on my feet. I sank down in one corner and they ran into my lap. I was able to jerk my knees up quickly or strike at them with my hands and the rattle of the iron handcuffs drove them off for a time. They formed a line opposite me and glared at me with their fearful, bright eyes. I could not get my coat or vest off to cram into the holes because of the cuffs on my wrists.

Finally I was exhausted—I had paced the deck of the steamboat the whole previous night—and I dozed off to sleep. No sooner had I done so than one of those affectionate, inquisitive rodents climbed upon my breast and stuck its nose against the end of my nose! Although its nose was cold as ice it had the same effect upon me as a red-hot poker would have

had. Immediately every bit of life and energy left in me seemed touched off like a cannon and my head almost touched the ceiling in the jump I made. The sudden movement sent the rats scurrying to their holes for a short time. I had obtained all the sleep I desired in that place and I remained on my feet the rest of the night. The rats continued to run about the cell until long after daylight. The building was an old ruin and I was the only soul in it and there were no guards within calling distance. I related my awful experience to the guard who brought me my breakfast and he brought a hammer and some stakes and closed the holes. I asked a lieutenant who came in later why they had been so severe with me. He said that after I had retired in the officers' quarters a telegram had been received from the chief of government detectives, Mr. Tallon, in St. Louis, instructing them to place me in irons and close confinement until he sent for me, as I was certain to escape if given the slightest chance.

I was kept in that cell another night, being given a couple of blankets and left alone for the night, minus the rats. In the morning two detectives arrived and escorted me to St. Louis, where I was delivered to Captain Tallon. While in conversation in his office he said, "We have a place now that will hold you!" He said that it was entirely new and had just been finished for my especial benefit; that it was unfinished when I was sent to Alton and I had been kept up there until the new apartment should be ready for me. After an interview with Mrs. Saltmarsh and her daughter, who were friends of Assistant Provost Marshal William Patrick, and were visiting in the office, I was sent to the Myrtle Street

prison, where I was placed in a dungeon under the sidewalk. It was an excavation in the ground which had been lined with boiler iron and this in turn with boards. There were two apartments or cells in the box, each about eight feet square and seven feet high. I was placed in the front cell next to the door. After the irons had been placed on my wrists and ankle I heard someone walking around in the rear cell, rattling a ball and chain. I asked Lonegan (the guard who put me there) who was in the other cell. He said, "Hist! That is a steamboat burner and they will hang him sure." After the guard had left me I called out, "Hello in there, partner." He answered, "Hello!" When I asked his name he said, "Smith." That name was in such common use during the war as a disguise that it excited my suspicion. I asked him how long he had been in there, and he replied by asking me what day it was? I said it was Tuesday. He said, "I have been in here two weeks to-morrow." Chief Tallon had told me the cell had just been completed and that no one had occupied it and I knew at once that either he or Smith was lying. I decided that "Smith" was a detective. We conversed quite a while about things in general and then he asked me if I knew Bob Loudon, which confirmed my suspicion that he was seeking information about our activities.

After we had been in the dungeon two or three days Lonegan came in and told Smith that he would have to go uptown for trial. He was returned to his cell late in the afternoon. As Smith did not enjoy the freezing and darkness of his cell this was a ruse to give him a vacation. The weather was bitter cold and we had no light except his candle. I was not permitted the luxury of a light. I was taken into the office

once a day to warm up or I should have frozen to death. I was well fed and friends brought me food and clothing.

Smith's real name was John Murphy. He was a devout Catholic and on one of his outings for "trial" he met Father Ryan, who told "Smith" I was a warm personal friend of his and that he thought a great deal of me. When Smith returned to the dungeon he told me of his meeting with Father Ryan and also that he was a detective and had been detailed to the cell to extract information from me. He said he now wanted me to understand that the authorities could never learn anything through him that would incriminate me. I told him that I knew he was a detective because of the disparity between his statement and that of Captain Tallon regarding the age of the dungeon. He informed me that he would be relieved from duty in a day or two and that I might write any private letters I desired and he would promise to deliver them safely for me. He said: "My home is in Louisiana, Missouri, and my wife and children are there. I have not seen them for two years and I wish you could think of some scheme by which I may go to visit them." I thought the matter over and decided to write a letter to my fiancée, who lived near Saverton, some twenty-five miles north of Smith's home. In the letter I stated that Smith had been a prisoner in my cell, charged with burning steamboats, and after a lengthy trial had been exonerated and released. I told her he lived near Louisiana and had promised to carry this letter to her and that I wanted her to send me the package I had left with her before I was arrested. I told her it was unfortunate the package had not reached the South and that it was



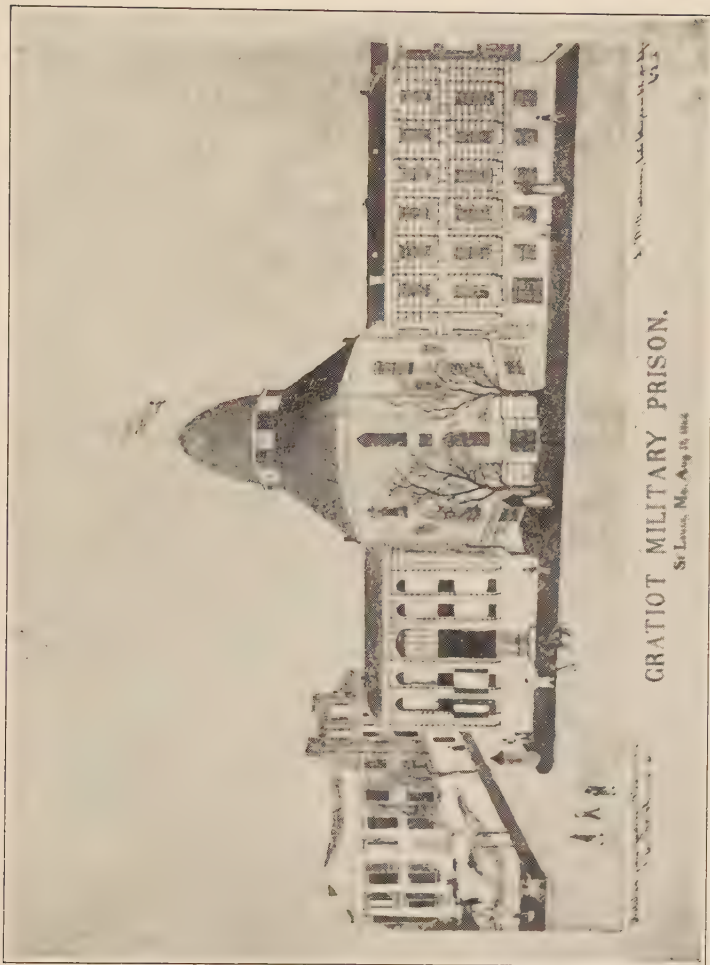
very important that I should have it now, and ended by requesting her to wrap it securely so it could not be inspected and send it to me by Smith, as I was sure he was a trusty messenger.

It was agreed that Smith should show this letter to Captain Tallon. When Tallon read the part referring to the important package I had left with Miss Glascock he decided it was something the government should possess and Smith was immediately ordered to go to Saverton and get it. En route he stopped at Louisiana and spent two days with his family ere he proceeded to Miss Glascock's home in Ralls County. He informed her of his acquaintance with me and our imprisonment together. After she had read the letter he told her that it was simply a ruse to afford him an opportunity to visit his family. Smith and I had planned for her to take one of her photographs and write me a note to be placed with it, stating that this was the only thing she could recollect having received from me for safe keeping and that she had promised me faithfully to return it when I requested it. The photograph and note, wrapped and sealed securely, presented the appearance of a very precious article of some sort. On Smith's return to St. Louis he reported promptly to Tallon's office and gave him the package. On opening it and finding nothing but the photograph and note Tallon was exceedingly angry.

The night after Smith's return to St. Louis old Mike, the turnkey and sergeant in charge of the room I occupied, came to my cell about eleven o'clock at night and said I was wanted in the office. I inquired the reason and he said, "That is none of your business; all you have to do is to obey orders!" Mike was a staunch Catholic and through Father Ryan and

Smith he had become a great friend of mine and did many favors for me on the sly. We went downstairs and instead of taking me to the office we went into the yard and through a side gate into his house, which adjoined the prison premises. On entering his dining-room I found Mr. Smith! We were rejoiced to meet again and embraced each other. He told me all about his trip and we laughed and congratulated each other on the way we had pulled the wool over Captain Talton's eyes. I never saw Smith after that night.

The dungeon under the sidewalk in which I was confined was so cold that I suffered intensely and after Smith's removal I was sent to Gratiot Street prison and placed in room number 3 with several other Confederates, among whom were Lieutenant William H. Sebring, Colonel John Carlin, Joe Leddy, Sam Clifford, and Shed Davis. Someone told the prison keeper that Colonel Carlin and myself had a plan to escape. Carlin was removed from our room and we were both put in irons. I became very angry and threatened dire things and the escape of our roomful of men. The irons were removed from my ankle but the handcuffs were left on and I was taken back to the dungeon in Myrtle Street. Part of the time I had no candle and the cell was in absolute darkness and so cold I was taken to the office occasionally to sit by the stove. Finally, I wrote to Colonel Broadhead, the provost marshal, and asked that he remove me from the dungeon, as I was about to freeze to death. On December 19 he ordered me sent back to Gratiot Street prison, where I was again placed in Number 3. The room had been improved during my absence with a new set of iron gratings on the windows. I very much enjoyed the change to light, warm



GRATIOT MILITARY PRISON.

St Louis, Mo., Aug 19, 1864



quarters and the society of my roommates. We were permitted to walk in the yard one hour each day for exercise. I was kept in irons for three months, until March 29, 1864.

The night I was sent from the dungeon to Gratiot Street prison about sixty prisoners escaped from it in the following manner: Standing inside the prison yard a short distance from the old McDowell residence was a small brick room, formerly used as a kitchen. A pair of steps led into the cellar from the outside. The room was used exclusively as a lamp house. There was a large closet in the lamp room, in which the rats had gnawed a big hole. One of the prisoners who aided in the care of the lamps discovered there was a deep cellar under the lamp house. With one or two other men he set to work on a long tedious job of more than a month. They carefully took up part of the floor and began tunneling from the cellar; having first cut through the brick wall near the floor of the cellar on the west side, they tunneled across the prison yard about ten feet, then under Sergeant Mike's yard (which adjoined the prison yard) about six feet, under his brick house, which was about sixteen feet wide and had no cellar beneath it, and on west across Mike's west yard about eight feet, where they reached a two-story brick house and cut through its wall. They found there a cellar with steps leading into the back yard of the residence. Their tunnel was not less than forty feet in length, through four brick walls and under Mike's house. The opening was large enough for a man to crouch on his hands and feet and draw an oblong baking pan with a rope between his hands and feet. The dirt from the tunnel more than filled the cellar



under the lamp house and to dispose of the residue the men tied the bottoms of their pants and drawers legs securely and filled their pants with dirt, which they emptied in the water-closet near by. By this remarkable feat of civil engineering the tunnel was completed. When the promoters were at length ready to leave the prison via the tunnel they told their comrades the secret. Sixty-two men passed through the tunnel and through the last yard into the street, where they walked safely and leisurely along the sidewalk west on Gratiot Street. Unfortunately the sixty-third man was determined to go east instead of going west with the others. When he met a guard he turned and ran back west. The guard fired at him and he halted with the small amount of brains he had possessed frightened out of him. When the guard took him to the prison office he revealed the plot. Guards were rushed to the outer end of the tunnel in time to catch fifteen more candidates for liberty, fresh air, and better food.

Quite often it happened that some self-important citizen was arrested and imprisoned in Gratiot. He would pace up and down and storm, declaring it an outrage and saying the authorities could not arrest and lock him up for nothing, with no charges and no trial. In the midst of his tirade some fellow who had been treated the same way would remark, "How did you get in here then, if they cannot lock you up?" Whereupon the injured citizen would give him a side glance that would stop a clock or pick a lock and continue to walk the floor, but we would hear no more from him as to what the Yanks had a right to do to him for no offense. In those stirring war days no man was of importance or standing until he had been

locked up in Gratiot Street prison at least a few days. One might at any time visit Gratiot or Myrtle Street prison and see such men as Alton Long, D. Robert Barclay, Joseph Donovan, Bob McDonald, and Charles L. Hunt walking about with their hands in their pockets like the occupants of the bullrings in the city jail at the present day. However, their conversation and dispositions were quite at variance with those of the present-day occupants of the city jail. The citizens referred to would be rounded up about town and locked up without charges, apology, or explanation and after being boarded for from one week to two months they would be called before the provost marshal and presented with the oath of allegiance to the United States, which they had to sign without question, no matter how great the effort. Often the victim nearly choked to death on it, while the salt water dropped from his eyes and he departed emitting utterances that made the atmosphere seem blue in his wake. Many of these same men now hurrah for the Star-Spangled Banner and would enlist under it if necessary.

Occasionally there would be placed in our room in Gratiot some inebriate well soaked with the extract of damnation, who was unable to do anything but lie down and mope. He would say, "Boys, how is a fellow to get a little nip in here?" "No nips in here!" "Oh, but I must have a few drinks to taper off with or I will have the delirium tremens or epileptic fits!" Then he would beg a guard to take a note to a friend, offering to pay him well. He never got his drink or had the jimjams. On the contrary, in two or three days the drunk would look like a real man and would be the first to guy the next inebriate who

came into the prison. It was the same way with tobacco users. None of them ever had chills, dyspepsia, heartburn, toothache, blindness, or the thousand and one other things they said they would have unless they used it constantly. Many a man was cured of these accursed habits by being imprisoned for a few months where it was absolutely impossible to obtain tobacco or whiskey. As I had never used either I had no cause for complaint.

On June 15, 1864, we were ordered by Sergeant Mike Welsh to take our bedding out and hang it on the railing of a large porch at the second story on the south and west end of the building. When about eight of the prisoners were standing on the porch the supports gave way where they adjoined the building wall. In the fall Sergeant Mike, Joe Leddy, and Colclazer were slightly injured and Captain Livingstone was seriously hurt. As the porch went down I grasped the iron grating of the second story window and hung there about eighteen feet above the ground. The iron ball that was chained to my ankle swung to and fro like the pendulum on an old-fashioned Dutch clock. As the ball weighed thirty pounds I had difficulty in hanging to the grating. I managed to pull myself up on the round iron rods until I got my toes on the window sill and was the admired object of a gang of prisoners below me until a ladder could be procured and I was rescued. It was a miraculous escape for the other men, as the porch turned upside down as it fell.

On February 13 we were down in the yard enjoying our daily hour of exercise and, as usual, we got into all the devilment we could find. We especially enjoyed purloining anything that was loose, not red-hot, or

more than five hundred pounds in weight. Among the articles I stole and carried up to my room was the iron handle off the grindstone and a large butcher-knife, taken through the kitchen window. Sebring stole the axe used for splitting wood for the cook stove. We had no use in the world for these articles but took them through pure cussedness. That night we held court in our room. A judge was appointed, also a sheriff, lawyers, and a jury. Any man found guilty of stealing from the United States government was put on trial. The defendant was invariably found guilty and the general punishment was to pour half a gallon of water down inside his shirt collar or in the front waistband of his pants. So far as personal experience can testify there was not much choice between the two modes of punishment. One had a longer range and the other produced a more acute sensation.

One night in the midst of a trial in came Captain Masterson, the prison keeper. He was bull-mad all the way through, and demanded the axe, washpan, knife, and various other articles missing, but made no mention of the handle of the grindstone. We told him we were in peaceable possession of the articles and he would have to hunt for them, as we would not deliver them without a replevin warrant. Then he foamed all over and started in to make things unpleasant for us. By this time old Mike had entered the room. He was a favorite with all of us. We had made no effort to hide anything except the butcher knife. With it I had gouged out some of the mortar of the rough wall, placed the knife in the excavation, wet the mortar in the washpan, and plastered it over the knife in the wall. Then I washed the pan clean.

They easily found the axe and the pan and we let them hunt for the knife, calling out "hot" or "cold" as they approached or left the spot where it was concealed. Finally, the hunt was abandoned and Masterson quieted down and talked to us of other things in a friendly way. He chanced to look up and saw the handle of the grindstone hanging on a nail near the ceiling. He asked: "What's that yez got up there? And phut the devil are yez goin' to do wit that?" "We thought we would get the grindstone to-morrow and then we could grind up the axe and the butcher knife." "Yez will get the grindstone to-morrow, will yez? Well, not by a damned sight! Yez won't get a chance for a week!" He jumped upon a chair, got the grindstone handle, and said to me, "Grimes, I never heard you swear an oath and I never knew you to lie or do anyone a mean trick, but you are the damnedest scoundrel in this whole prison!" He switched himself out of the room, looking daggers at me over his shoulder as he went.

Captain Masterson was a small, self-important, intelligent Irishman, who weighed about one hundred and twenty pounds. He was in charge of Gratiot Street prison when I returned to St. Louis in November, 1863. While I was in the dungeon at Lynch's negro pen he visited me and that was where I first saw him. When I was transferred to Gratiot I was in his care. The prison also had a military commander, Captain Byrne, who was in charge of the guards and was superior officer to all the other government employees. During the latter part of my sojourn in old Gratiot, Captain Masterson was also imprisoned there. I learned that he was charged with stealing commissary stores that had been placed in his charge



for prison use. He endeavored to convince me that he had been removed from office and locked up because of his leniency to prisoners, particularly to me, as he had sent me to my room on the afternoon of December 31, when Lieutenant Sebring and myself were handcuffed around a post in the yard when there was a fearful blizzard raging. About a half hour later Captain Byrne had us sent back to the yard. I wrote Captain Masterson a friendly letter sympathizing with him in his misfortune. He was grateful and wrote two poems for me. One referred to the treacherous friends who had turned him down and the other was about my imprisonment in the dungeon with Smith. Masterson did not know that Smith had befriended me instead of spying upon me. He claimed that he had influenced the authorities to let him take me to Gratiot when I was about to freeze, but I think this statement was false.

I will here relate an incident regarding my friend, Lieutenant William H. Sebring. When I was placed in Room Number 3 in Gratiot Street prison Sebring was one of the seven occupants of the room. I very much desired to correspond with my friend, Miss Annie Perdue of Memphis, who has frequently been mentioned in the course of this narrative. I dared not endanger her by corresponding with her myself, therefore I requested Lieutenant Sebring to write to her at my dictation. To this he readily consented, and the correspondence went on for several weeks. Soon Sebring began to insert a few words on his own behalf, then some lines, until finally they wrote directly to each other. The result was that when Sebring escaped from Gratiot on June 18, 1864, he made a bee line to Memphis to see her. Before long I read in the

Memphis *Appeal* an account of their marriage. The next time I met Sebring was in 1880, when he visited me in my home in St. Louis. My next meeting with Miss Perdue (Mrs. Sebring) was on January 14, 1906, when I visited her and Lieutenant Sebring in Jacksonville, Florida. He was then mayor of that city and had several grown children and some grandchildren. It is needless to remark that the reunion was a happy occasion for all of us.

On January 24, 1864, I was taken before Lieutenant Richardson, assistant provost marshal general, for an investigation of my travels, occupation, etc., during the war. After he had carefully written down my statements I refused to sign the document and he became furiously angry. On February 15 I was again taken before Richardson for a further examination, but I refused positively to make a statement or to sign the former one. On March 31 I was taken for trial to the new Laclede Hotel building (at that time not yet occupied as a hotel). The charge against me was that of mail-carrier and spy for the Confederacy. The trial lasted parts of two days. I was defended by Attorney Alexander J. P. Garasche, but the court had already shuffled, stacked, and cut the cards and I was sentenced to be hanged on July 8, 1864. After the trial I was returned to my old abode, Room Number 3 in Hotel Gratiot.

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN ESCAPE THAT WAS FOILED AND A PARDON

ABOUT two o'clock in the afternoon of December 24, as I was descending an outside stairway to get water from a hydrant in the yard, a prisoner whom I knew was standing at a window that opened on the stairway at the second floor. He handed me a note which said: "Ten of us have procured an axe and some other tools and have planned to break out to-night. If you men in Number 3 can manage to get down into the room under yours by ten o'clock we will have our plans in operation and you can join us." I read the note to my roommates and we decided we would join them, as it would give us a little relief from monotony, and some exercise, whether or not we succeeded in making our escape. Our large coal heating-stove stood in one corner of our three-cornered room. The weather was quite warm for December, but we built up a hot fire in order to heat our two poker red hot. With them I burned a succession of holes in the floor in a circle and thus removed a round block fourteen inches in diameter. While I was burning the floor my six roommates pulled our long pine table in a position that hid me from the eyes of the guard who paced the hall, looking into our room through the barred window in the door, and made all the noise they could with a game of cards. The hole was completed by ten o'clock. We then looked down into the room below ours (where there were more than fifty

prisoners) and right under the hole stood four Federal guards awaiting us. They said: "Hello, boys! How are you? Come on down—we will help you!" After guying each other a while we stuck the block back in the floor and in a jolly manner discussed the episode. There was no investigation made of our room that night—not a word said by the officials.

Next morning when we had finished breakfast and cleaned up our room Sergeant Welsh came in and said: "Gentlemen, get your hats and come with me; I have a little treat in store for you." He took us down to the yard and up on the porch of the old McDowell residence and there he handcuffed us three and three men around the two posts. As Sam Clifford was the seventh man and there was no room at the posts for him he was placed in a dungeon at the south end of the house.

The prisoners from the Rebel officers' quarters gathered about us and fed us all kinds of good food and delicacies that had been brought to them by friends and such goodies surely did astonish our stomachs. As the weather was like summer, although it was Christmas day, we enjoyed the change exceedingly. At eleven o'clock at night we were taken back to our room, happy over our unexpected pleasure on Christmas day. Next day the punishment was repeated. The third morning a proposition was made by old Mike that any of us who would promise not to try to escape would be permitted to remain in our room. Sebring, Clifford, and myself refused to accept such terms, so Sebring and myself were again handcuffed to the porch post, and Clifford was returned to the dungeon.

As we were passing the window that opened on

our outside stairway some man handed Sebring a note minutely describing the man who had disclosed to Captain Masterson our plot to escape. The informer was a Rebel prisoner, an assistant in the officers' cookhouse that stood in the yard near where we were handcuffed to the porch post. While Mike was busy handcuffing Sebring and me to the post Clifford stood near, waiting for Mike to put him in the dungeon. Sebring said: "Sam, do you see that fellow with the molasses-colored hair who is just going into the kitchen? That is the fellow who informed on us when we cut that hole in the floor Christmas night!" On hearing this Clifford ran to the man, grabbed him in his arms, and, carrying him into the kitchen where there was a large coal range almost red hot, deposited him upon it. But for the bravery and presence of mind of Mike and a couple of soldiers the man would have been burned to death right there. He was laid by in the hospital for several months.

Sam Clifford was twenty-one years old, six feet two inches in height, and weighed nearly two hundred pounds. He was the handsomest man I ever saw. He was a pugilist, and was possessed of the meanest disposition imaginable. He was fond of picking the banjo and the prison authorities had a pair of handcuffs made with a long bar joining the cuffs so he could play the banjo while wearing the cuffs. Besides the handcuffs he had a ball and chain attached to one ankle. One afternoon two drunken German soldiers, who had made themselves obnoxious at Benton Barracks, were placed in our room by old Mike. They were still under the influence of liquor and they began to brag about what strong men they were and



how many guards it required to make them drill at Benton Barracks. Clifford laughed at them as he sat picking his banjo. "You had better keep still," he remarked, "or it will not take as many men to make you drill in here as it did at Benton Barracks." One of the drunkards answered: "The hell you say! How many men do you think it will take to make us drill in here?" Clifford said quietly, "I do not think it will take more than one!" We all knew at once that that soldier's finish was in sight. Clifford laid down the banjo and with a broad smile on his face he said, "I will show you just how many it will take in here!" He ran at the prisoner and knocked him down with his fist and as the man lay on the floor Clifford picked up the iron ball that was attached to his own leg and struck him on the chest with it. Old Mike had not left the hall as he knew there was likely to be trouble between Clifford and the drunken Feds. He rushed in and caught Clifford before he could grab the other soldier. Mike called help and the wounded man was carried to the hospital. Two days later he was buried in the cemetery at Benton Barracks with military honors. Clifford was not punished in any way for this cold-blooded murder.

Clifford said the reason he was so down on the Germans was that a month previous to this episode he and Captain Mosely had escaped from this same Room Number 3 by lowering themselves from a window by means of sheets and blankets torn into strips. Mosely was well acquainted with St. Louis, but he had no use whatever for Clifford. When they reached the street Mosely refused to take Clifford with him among friends for protection. He made his way to the Mississippi River and found there some soldiers

from the arsenal who were in bathing, having left their clothing in a skiff near by. Clifford took the skiff to go across the river, not noticing the clothing it contained. While he was pushing the boat off from shore and getting the oars ready for use the soldiers captured him and took him to the arsenal. The news of his escape from Gratiot had been spread about by wire and he was soon returned to prison.

Clifford swore eternal vengeance on all Germans and on Mosely in particular. In after years Captain Mosely was sheriff of Lincoln County, Missouri. Clifford heard of his position and made an excuse to visit and hunt in Lincoln County, near Mosely's headquarters at Troy. They met several times and Clifford acted friendly each time. One day he stole some books from a lawyer in order to force Mosely to arrest him for the misdemeanor. Mosely came upon him as he sat eating his dinner in a hotel at Moscow Mills, near Troy. Clifford always carried a Winchester rifle with him and it was standing in a corner near by as he ate. As Mosely entered the dining-room Clifford reached for the rifle and Mosely drew a revolver and shot him dead on the spot. So ended Clifford's vicious career.

Lieutenant Sebring and myself were taken out at eleven each morning and handcuffed around the porch post and Clifford was put in the dungeon until December 31, 1863. That morning when we left our room the mercury stood at seventy above zero. About noon the wind shifted to the north, turned cold, and came in gusts. Then followed one of the worst snowstorms I ever saw in my entire life. By dark the snow had drifted around the post where we stood until it was two feet deep. The guards suffered so with cold

that they were relieved every hour. I was dressed in thin clothing, with a pair of wornout cloth shoes on my feet and a ball and chain attached to my right ankle. For a time I had an old sack to stand on, but it was taken away from me by order of Captain Byrne. Two pairs of handcuffs were used on Sebring and me and the post went up between us to the floor of the porch above.

From our position in the Gratiot Prison yard we could easily see the windows of Judge Harrison's residence, which stood on the southwest corner of Eighth and Gratiot streets. As we stamped our feet and walked around the post a large lantern which hung above our heads made us visible to anyone looking from Judge Harrison's windows. About ten o'clock that night Miss Dora and Miss Cornelia Harrison stood at the window with their bonnets on and made signals to us. We could not understand them, but knew they were trying to tell us something. Some three hours later Captain Byrne came to us attended by Mike and some guards and we were released and sent to our room. I was so near frozen that I was unconscious and had to be carried to the room and it was two hours before I was restored to consciousness. We learned later that the Misses Harrison had ordered out their carriage and driven to the residence of Provost Marshal Broadhead, who was a neighbor and old friend of theirs. They told him of the cruelty being practiced on us and that we were being frozen to death. At their request he wrote an order for them to deliver to Captain Byrne at the prison posthaste and therefore to the young ladies I owe my life and escape from freezing to death. When I was removed from the post the mercury registered twenty-two de-

grees below zero, having dropped from seventy above since eleven o'clock in the morning of the same day.

One of the prisoners confined in the room with us was Joseph Lanier, a farmer who lived near the town of Savannah, Buchanan County. He was charged with burning a mill and being implicated in the death of its owner, and had been sent to Gratiot for safe keeping until the day set for his execution, which was to take place at Savannah several weeks after his trial. On the afternoon of June 8, Sergeant Mike came to our room and said to Lanier: "Joe, you must be ready to go to Savannah on the train to-night at two o'clock." We knew that the day following was the one set for his execution, and we felt the greatest sorrow and sympathy for him, as he was a favorite of all the prisoners in our room. We decided to try to effect his escape in some way.

Sergeant Mike took me and another man down into the yard to bring up water from the hydrant which stood just inside the kitchen. While getting the water I managed, unnoticed by Mike, to steal a butcher-knife from one of the drawers of the kitchen table. In our room was a pine table about ten feet long and three feet wide on which we ate our meals, wrote our letters, etc. It stood before one of the large, grated windows and after dark the boys gathered around it with a deck of cards and began a game. More noise was never made over a card game before or since. While it was going on I got under the table with a poker that belonged to our heating stove and the knife I had stolen from the kitchen and began cutting a hole in the stone wall of the building just under the sill of the large, iron-grated window. The wall was about eighteen inches thick. When I had removed

about a wheelbarrow load of rock and mortar from the lower sill of the window I came to a dressed stone about two feet long, a foot wide, and four inches thick which formed a part of the exterior face of the wall. Unknown to me a lot of glass that had been broken from the window at some previous date lay on the outer edge of this dressed stone. As I pulled the rock into the room from under the window the iron bar scraped the loose glass off the outside edge and it fell to the pavement, three stories below. Unfortunately, an officer of the day was passing along the sidewalk below at this identical moment and the glass struck him as it fell. He stepped out into the street and looked up to see where it came from and discovered a dim light shining through the hole under the window. Not more than three minutes elapsed before we heard footsteps on the stairs. Joe Lanier was not in the card game—he was busy tearing up sheets and blankets for a rope preparatory to making his descent from the window to the pavement.

There was a guard in the little hallway between the four bedrooms on our floor. The window opening from our room to the hall was heavily grated. The door was fastened with a large iron bar and padlock, the key of which was in Mike's possession. The door was hurriedly opened and in came Captain Masterson and one or two others. Masterson was a consequential little Irishman, fond of using big words. He said, "What are you fellows doing up so late?" Some of the men told him we were sitting up to bid Joe good-bye. "Yes," replied Masterson, "I guess some of you fellows intended to go with him." When I heard the officers coming up the stairs I crawled out from under the table, got into bed as quickly as I



could, and covered up head and ears. My long black whiskers and my clothing were one mass of lime and whitewash—I was a sight to behold. Masterson looked around the room an instant and then asked, “Where is Grimes?” “He is not feeling well,” someone answered, “and has gone to bed.” Masterson stepped to my bed and with one quick jerk pulled all the bedclothes off me and then said, with a laugh: “Grimes, it’s a damned fine Mason yez are! How many degrees have yez taken?”

After examining the hole in the wall the officers took poor Lanier out of our room and downstairs. A few days later we saw an account of his execution in one of the St. Louis papers. I still have in my possession a piece of the stone I cut from under the window that night. It is about four inches long, two and a half inches wide, and an inch and a half thick. On it is carved a man with a ball and chain and handcuffs. It was carved by Joe Elliott, a half-brother of my able assistant, Miss Annie Perdue of Memphis. The carving represented myself.

On the day after Lanier had been taken away, the five inmates of our Room Number 3, were taken down to the yard at half-past one o’clock and handcuffed around the two porch posts, where I had so nearly frozen to death on December 31. The weather was now warm and pleasant, and the Rebel officers and citizen prisoners came out of their quarters and plied us with strawberries and all kinds of luxuries given them by visiting friends. Of course we enjoyed this immensely, and were sorry when at six-thirty Mike came to return us to our room. This program was continued for three days, when Captain Masterson discovered we were enjoying our punishment most

amazingly and put an end to it by returning us to our room. Thereafter no more outdoor post, strawberries, cake, or ice cream ever came our way.

After I was sentenced to be hanged on July 10 I planned to escape ere that day should arrive. It was now drawing near and I realized that the time for me to act was at hand. I talked the situation over with my roommates and many plans were advanced, but none satisfied me. I was sick a few days and was placed in the hospital on the third floor of another part of the building. While there I had an opportunity to familiarize myself with the location of houses, fences, alleys, guards, etc., surrounding and adjoining the prison yard. We were occasionally taken into the yard for exercise for an hour while the floor of our room dried out after we had scrubbed it. Sergeant Mike Welsh had special charge of the prisoners in rooms number 1, 2, 3, and 4. He would escort us down to the lower prison yard, where we were left in charge of three special guards. This yard ran the length of the common prison building. It was about one hundred feet long and thirty wide, and was enclosed on the west and north sides, next to the Christian Brothers' College building, by a board fence about sixteen feet high. On the east side of the yard was the building for common prisoners, 100 by 80 feet, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  stories high, with a lower story that was half under ground. This lower story was used as a cookhouse, laundry, etc. The third story was a hospital, containing about one hundred and fifty iron cots. On the side of this building next to the yard were at least thirty windows that looked out into the yard.

Old Mike would leave us in charge of the three

guards and go to unlock one of the other rooms so the prisoners could scrub it. These "lock-up" rooms were in the third story of the big six-cornered stone building, a cross hall dividing the rooms. From one to ten men were kept in each of these four rooms, and a guard always patrolled the hall. The doors were all locked with large padlocks and Mike carried the keys. A duplicate set of keys was kept in the office. A long flight of outside steps led up to these rooms. At the foot of the stairs was a hydrant and near by was a brick toilet-room, the same one I have spoken of in connection with my first escape from Gratiot in October, 1862. Between the upper and the lower yard (where we were) there was a narrow passageway about eighty feet long. A guard patrolled this passageway to prevent prisoners from the upper quarters and the lower ones from mingling. The recital of these minute particulars is tedious, but it is essential to an understanding of later events.

When I had my plans laid, I gave my roommates instructions regarding leaving the prison when we should attempt to escape, and warned them of the danger from the guards' guns. The instructions were to pass through the gate after it had been broken open, run directly west two blocks, and then south to Chouteau Avenue. There was a guard stationed in the yard of Mike's home adjoining the south end of the yard in which we were exercised. Another guard was in the Christian Brothers' yard on the north end, and two guards patrolled the alley on the west. From our yard not one of these guards could be seen, but during my stay in the hospital I had noted minutely their location and movements. There were now only five men in Room Number 3.

After I had fully instructed my roommates I placed my Bible on the table; we laid our left hands upon it and with our right hands raised we took a solemn oath that we would stand by each other to the death, and in the effort to gain our liberty would kill anyone who tried to stop us in our dash for freedom. With the exception of Schultz we were all under sentence of death, and it was liberty or death to four of us. That was a solemn moment for us as we five men stood with one hand on the Bible and the other lifted toward heaven imploring the Almighty God for success and pledging our lives to meet the enemy and death face to face. We knew we were five unarmed men against eight armed guards, and three of us wore irons, handcuffs, and an ankle shackle with ball and chain. We then took five slips of paper and wrote on three of them, "Catch guard." On the fourth was, "Break gate open." On the fifth slip was, "Throw axe out of window." These slips were placed in a cap and each man in turn drew out a slip and held it unseen in his hand until the entire five were drawn and then each man read in a distinct, solemn voice what duty was written on his slip. Mine read, "Break gate open." Schultz had, "Throw axe out of window." Colclazer, Douglas, and McElhenny each had, "Catch guard."

Mike took us down into the yard while our room dried and as soon as he left us the three men whose duty it was to catch the guards carelessly took up positions near the three guards and walked back and forth. Those five or six hundred Rebel prisoners who were at the prison windows stared at us as if we were a lot of cannibals and the guards were so interested in watching them that they did not suspect our men

passing to and fro so near them. I sat down near the low window that opened into the yard from the kitchen, where the axe was kept. Schultz stepped quickly down the four steps into the kitchen door, grabbed the axe, and threw it out of the window to my side. I slowly and carelessly picked it up and started toward the woodpile that was just inside the gate. When the guard who stood between the window and the woodpile ordered me to put down the axe I said, "I only want to split a little wood for exercise." He began to bring his gun down from its upright position when Douglas seized him and pinioned his arms, while the other two men instantly pinioned the other two guards in the same manner. I raised the axe to strike the guard and he dropped his gun, whereupon Schultz immediately picked it up and ran to the assistance of McElhenny and Colclazer. Douglas quickly jerked the revolver from his guard's pocket and went to the assistance of the two men who were struggling with the guards. When the latter saw that we had the advantage they dropped their guns. Colclazer and McElhenny got their revolvers and ran for the gate. I did not delay a second, but gave a loud signal yell and jumped to the gate and struck the big padlock that held a large iron bar across the gate with the axe, smashing the lock to fragments. I pulled the long iron bar from its fastenings and with my right hand threw the gate open.

Just as I did this the two guards in the alley ran up and fired blindly through the gate. One ball struck the shackle on my leg and passed between the two lower bones of my right leg. The other ball passed entirely through the 4 by 4 pine post at one side of the gate and buried itself in my neck, knocking me down



and out on the woodpile. Colclazer disobeyed instructions and climbed over the fence into Mike's yard and as he did so the guard stationed there shot him through the head, killing him instantly. Schultz ran north instead of west and was shot through the heart by some soldiers who were sitting on the ground playing cards when he ran into them unexpectedly. McElhenny ran as directed, but by this time the excitement was so high that the soldiers were shooting in every direction at everything in sight, and his knee cap was shot off. Of our party of five, only Colonel Douglas succeeded in escaping.

On the day before we made our attempt to escape we threw a note from our window across the hall into the window of Room Number 2, informing the inmates of our plan. There were five men in the room, Lieutenant William H. Sebring, John Carlin, Jasper Hill, Bob Loudon, and Yates. Thus they were informed of our purpose and when they heard the Rebel yell they were to rush down into the lower yard and join in the fight. In order to do so they had to pass the guard in the narrow passage between the two sections of the yard. At the hour of the attack they were in the upper yard. Carlin was in the lead and he was prepared for the guard. He struck him on the head with a brick and the guard let him pass. When they reached me I was lying on the woodpile, bleeding profusely from the wounds in my leg and neck. Lieutenant Sebring bent over me to pick me up. I insisted that they must not stop for me, but run for their lives. The gate was still wide open, the guards who belonged there having deserted their posts for safer quarters after they shot me. Hill, Sebring, Carlin, and Yates ran through the gate and

made their escape. Two months after this John Carlin, who was a son of Governor Carlin of Illinois, was shot and killed in that state by a sheriff who was trying to capture him.

As I lay helpless on the woodpile some guards ran up and would have shot me had not good old Mike thrown himself across my body and shouted, "I am in charge of this man and I order you to stand back and not to touch or injure him!" Of course, Mike's authority was above that of the guards and they stood back. Mike was a huge fellow and he gathered me up in his arms and carried me to the hospital on the third floor, the tears streaming down his face as he went. One of the prisoners walked alongside and carried the thirty pound ball that was attached to my leg. The shackle and ball were removed from my ankle when I was placed on the cot in the hospital. I had worn them constantly (with the exception of a few days) from December 19 until June 18, and my leg had become very sore in consequence.

Doctors Youngblood and Dudley extracted the ball, which had passed between the two bones in the calf of my leg and lodged next to the skin. The ball in my neck popped out upon slight pressure. It had passed through the post and was spent when it struck me. I still treasure the ball that went through my leg. McElhenny was placed on a cot near mine in the hospital, while the bodies of Schultz and Colclazer were taken to the dissecting room. My wound did not seem inclined to heal, and although a silk handkerchief was passed entirely through the leg at the time the ball was extracted, five days later a piece of my trousers about five inches across came into sight and was pulled out by my nurse, Mr. Preston Westerman.

Erysipelas appeared, but I began to improve slowly. A large washtub with a block of ice in it was kept by my bedside and my nurse bathed my wound in it.

The tenth of July had been set for my execution in accordance with the edict issued by Colonel Merrill. On July 13 Dr. Youngblood came into the ward and sat down by my bedside. Bidding my nurse retire, he spoke to me in a low voice: "Ab, to-morrow morning the chief surgeon, Dr. Breed, the provost marshal, General Davidson, and perhaps one or two other officials are coming here to examine your wound and general condition. Of course, you must be aware of their purpose?" I replied that I was; they wanted to see if I could stand up long enough to be hanged or whether I would die of the wound. Dr. Youngblood took a small package from his vest pocket and said: "Now, Ab, you secrete this dose in your bed and do not let a soul know a thing about it. When you see those officers coming in the door you swallow the contents of the package as quickly as you can and never once say that you are improving." I thanked him profusely as I understood that he was trying to save my life. That same day Miss Lizzie Ivers and Mrs. Wilson called to see me and that evening they sent me some canned peas, strawberries, blackberries, salmon, etc. I requested these, as Dr. Youngblood had told me to eat all I possibly could that night. Pres Westerman, my nurse, prepared the food and I began on it at six o'clock that night and by nine the next morning I had consumed the contents of every can.

From my cot to the entrance door was about seventy feet. About ten o'clock the party of officers entered the room and I hastily swallowed the ipecac

powder with a glass of water I had ready. Dr. Youngblood accompanied the officers and he detained them as long as he could by stopping at each cot to call attention to the patients as the officers proceeded in my direction. By the time they reached me I was the sickest mortal on earth and was filling that washtub with all the energy I possessed, which was no small quantity, for my very life depended upon it. The party stood and looked at me for a few moments and General Davidson remarked, "He seems to be a very sick man." Dr. Youngblood said, "Yes, he is not getting along as well as I hoped he would!" Dr. Breed looked on in silence. I have often wondered if he did not suspect the truth, but if he did he gave no sign of his suspicions. Soon they passed on around the room greeting the patients, and by the time they returned to my cot I was getting my second wind and exhibiting the remainder of my canned goods. For more than an hour I persisted in trying to turn myself inside out. After the officers left Dr. Youngblood returned to me and I could detect a twinkle in his eye as he said, "You certainly got the worth of that ipecac!" I was too weak to talk much, but I managed to say I would about as soon be hanged as to take ipecac.

A few days later I received notice from General Davidson's office that President Lincoln had commuted my sentence to confinement in the state penitentiary at Jefferson City. My leg and my spirits began to improve at once. The commutation of sentence was procured for me by several Union friends, Captain Tom Taylor and his son-in-law, Mr. Hudson Downs, being prominent among those who signed the plea for pardon.

The following is a copy of a letter from the United States War Department: "It is shown by the records that one Abner C. Grimes, a citizen of Missouri, was sentenced to be hung July 10th, 1864, for violation of the laws of war; that the sentence was commuted by the President on July 8th, 1864, to imprisonment during the war, and that on September 28th, 1864, the President further commuted the sentence to imprisonment to December 1st, 1864, at which time he was to be released upon taking the usual oath and furnishing a bond of \$5,000 for his future good behavior and loyalty to the Government. Nothing additional has been found in this office to show that the man was pardoned."

The above shows the sentence was commuted July 8, which was twenty days after I was wounded on June 18. The authorities frequently misnamed me "Abner" instead of Absalom. The above also shows that I was to be released December 1, 1864, according to the President's generous and merciful order. This was not done; the warden held me for an excuse to beat me, even though the pardon lay on his desk and he knew I was to be released. A special telegram from President Lincoln accomplished this, and evidently was not placed upon the records of the War Department at the time.

My partner, Robert Loudon, was mentioned in a preceding chapter as an inmate of Gratiot. He had been condemned to be hanged in the St. Louis city jail (on the spot where the office desk of the Laclede Hotel now stands). The black cap and rope had been made ready for use and he was taken from Gratiot, and placed in the city jail, when pressure brought to bear by Father Ryan and Mother Meredith caused





by the proper Military authorities, two-thirds of the members of the Commission in some action concurring in the sentence."

Forthwith The proceedings, finding and sentence in the above case was approved by the proper Commander, and the records forwarded for the action of the President of the United States.

In the case of Abner C. Graves a citizen of Kentucky, Mo., the sentence is committal to imprisonment during the war. He is now under strict guard, to the Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri, which place is hereby designated as his place of confinement.

By order of the Secretary of War:

E. D. Townsend

Assistant Adjutant General

Official:

(Signed) E. D. Townsend

Assistant Adjutant General

A Special Copy:

Genl. H. A. Davidson  
Adjut. Genl. & Asst. Prov. Mar. Genl.  
Dept. of the Mo.

CHARGE, FINDING, AND SENTENCE OF THE  
MILITARY COMMISSION

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Warden of the Missouri State Penitentiary.

General Rosecrans to delay the execution three months. Bob was then returned to Gratiot. Our hearts were full to overflowing and tears streamed down our cheeks as we embraced each other when we chanced to meet in the hall of the prison. He was placed in a room across the hall from mine. Shortly afterwards, when I lay on my cot in the hospital my nurse, Pres Westerman (a splendid gentleman, a Confederate prisoner), came to me with the information that a number of prisoners were to be sent to the Alton penitentiary that evening on board the *Kate Kearney* and that he was to be handcuffed to Bob Loudon.

A man named Ward occupied a cot next to mine. He was a political prisoner and was permitted to make rings and other ornaments of mussel shell and cannel coal. For the purpose of making these things he was permitted to have some files and other small tools. When Westerman told me he was going with Loudon I quickly reached over to Ward's table drawer and took out two files, which I gave to Westerman and told him to give them to Bob en route to Alton. Twelve prisoners were taken to the steamer *Kate Kearney*, a large stern-wheel boat. They were placed on the after end of the upper deck and four guards were placed with them. While the boat was going up the river her captain, William Thorwegen, who was a strong Southern sympathizer, asked the lieutenant in charge of the prisoners if he might send supper up for them. The officer consented with the proviso that supper be provided for the guards also. Captain Thorwegen had a fine supper sent up on trays carried by four or five cabin waiters.

After the waiters had delivered the trays they went

back down stairs and left the prisoners and guards to enjoy their suppers. Before the meal was sent up Bob had made good use of the files I sent him and the link on the handcuffs fastening him to Westerman had been cut, leaving each man with one cuff on his arm that he could not remove. After the meal was finished the cabin waiters returned to the upper deck to take the trays of dishes down stairs. When they came Bob took off his coat and hid it, thus being in his shirt-sleeves, as were the waiters; thus attired he assisted the waiters to gather up the dishes and walked away carrying a tray, unnoticed by the guards. It was now dark. He went downstairs, deposited his tray, and went on down to the lower deck. Just as the boat landed at Alton he quietly dropped over the railing into the river and swam to shore.

The prisoners were counted when entering the prison and thus it became known that one was missing. The iron cuff on poor Westerman's wrist gave proof that he was the man who had been fastened to Loudon and therefore knew something about his escape, but he would give no information whatever about it. For a whole week he was bucked and gagged from sunup to sundown and made to sit on top of a 4 by 4 inch stake that was driven into the ground in the prison yard. Loudon safely made his escape to the South and was not captured again. After the war was over he and William C. Streeter, whom I have had occasion to mention as clerk and assistant sergeant in command of Gratiot Street prison, went into partnership in the paint business. Bob died some years later in Mobile of yellow fever.

The morning after Loudon and Westerman left Gratiot, old Mike brought me a newspaper and

pointed out a certain paragraph. The heading was "Bob Louden's escape from the steamer *Kate Kearney* between St. Louis and Alton." I gave one long, loud yell and Dr. Youngblood hurried to my cot and asked anxiously, "Ab, have you gone crazy?" I showed him the paper. He and Dr. William C. Dudley were the physicians in charge of the hospital. Dr. Youngblood was a Southern man and Dr. Dudley was a Republican, but a mighty fine man. He was still practicing medicine in St. Louis in 1910.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN THE PENITENTIARY AT JEFFERSON CITY

It was during my imprisonment in Gratiot that General Sterling Price made his final raid up into Missouri, intending to capture Jefferson City. They had several battles on the way north from Arkansas and the Iron Mountain Railroad was literally torn up for miles. In one of these battles it was claimed that five men belonging to old Butcher McNeil, of Palmyra infamy, and a Major Wilson had been captured by the Confederates and in retaliation for McNeil's awful deeds at Palmyra the six were shot by the Rebels after the Federals had hoisted a flag of truce. This act was never proved, but in retaliation for it the commanding general at St. Louis ordered that six Rebel soldiers and Lieutenant Wolff be sent from the Alton penitentiary to St. Louis.

These seven men were placed in a room across the hall from me. There was a window opening into the hall from each room that afforded a clear view from one room into another. These men were conversing and wondering why they had been transferred from Alton to Gratiot. After a few hours some Federal officers entered their room and informed them that they were to be shot at ten o'clock the next morning at Benton Barracks in retaliation for the killing of McNeil's men. Never, so long as I live, will I be able to forget or cease to hear the cries and pleadings of those men after the death warrant had been read to

them. Ministers and priests were allowed to visit them and during the entire night their lamentations were ceaseless. At the appointed hour the next morning all but Lieutenant Wolff were tied, taken out, and shot. Why he was spared I never knew.

Shortly after this dreadful incident I was placed in a room by myself on the west side of the prison. I could see from my windows the spot where the old Union Depot was afterwards located, the spot where the Twelfth Street traffic bridge over the railroad tracks is now located. In this locality there was at this time a large camp of Federal soldiers. On one of the lower floors of Gratiot Prison was a Campbellite preacher named Smith, a very large man, who weighed more than two hundred pounds. He often conducted services in the prison and was a great favorite among our men. He and another man who shared his quarters were both condemned to death. The night before their execution was to take place a very affecting religious service was held in the laundry-room in the basement of the prison. In the laundry was a large tank about twelve feet long, three feet wide, and four feet deep, used for bathing purposes. This tank was filled with water and at the close of the service Smith baptized his companion in misfortune.

Promptly at ten o'clock the next day they were taken to the vicinity of Twelfth and Spruce streets. Here a gallows had been erected with two pulley-wheels fastened to the cross-beam about fifteen feet from the ground. Nooses were placed around the necks of the prisoners and ropes were run over the pulleys. Ten or fifteen soldiers then grasped each rope and hoisted the men from the ground. The rope

that held Smith broke and he fell to the ground, unable to rise. The rope was tied and he was again hoisted into the air. The bodies dangled in the sun for half an hour, in plain view from my window, before they were removed. This was but one of the many cruel sights I witnessed during the Civil War. Such sights caused me more suffering than my personal experiences ever did.

A short time after the hanging of Smith and his companion I was sent to the penitentiary at Jefferson City in company with Sergeant Barnes. We went by rail to Hermann, where we were transferred to the steamer *Calypso*, in command of Captain Burton. Barnes had been a sergeant at Gratiot prison and was in custody for rifling letters sent to the prisoners there. We reached Jefferson City late in the afternoon of November 13, 1864, and were taken in a wagon to the penitentiary, about half a mile distant from the river. There our clothing was exchanged for stripes, minus the stars and bars. No two pieces of my suit were put together so that the stripes matched at the seams and I looked like a traveling checkerboard. My long black whiskers were shaved off and my hair was closely cut by the prison barber. As I was badly crippled and on crutches I was assigned to quarters in the hospital.

When I left St. Louis dear old Sergeant Mike carried me out to the wagon in his arms and whispered to me to keep up my courage, as he knew my pardon was made out and I would be released the first day of December. He was positive because he had seen it on the desk in the office.

Just before leaving Gratiot a man named Lloyd, who had lost both arms in a premature discharge of

a cannon during the battle of Lexington, and who had been a military prisoner in the penitentiary, from which he had been transferred to Gratiot Street prison, gave me a photograph of a young lady, Miss Missouri Lobbins, who had been a frequent visitor at the penitentiary and was a religious worker among the convicts. Lloyd said she had loaned him the photograph while he was in the penitentiary but as he had been transferred to Gratiot without warning he had had no opportunity to return it to her. He now requested me to convey it to its owner together with an expression of his kindest regards. The first of December drew near without my meeting Miss Lobbins and I decided to ask a trusty to return the photograph. I asked one if he knew her and he said he did and that he would give it to her. I wrote a few lines explaining how the picture had come into my possession and expressing Mr. Lloyd's regards. At the same time I wrote a friendly note to a Miss Annie Fickle, a Confederate prisoner who had been transferred from Gratiot to the penitentiary.

The cause of her imprisonment was a pathetic one. Her home was in Lexington, Missouri. Her sweetheart, Mr. Campbell, was one of her neighbors. He was arrested and cast into the military prison, where she visited him several times. The officers were not very strict about the rules governing the prison and she prevailed upon a couple of Federal soldiers who did guard duty at the prison to agree to a scheme by which Campbell was to escape. She told the two guards that if they would bring him to her house on a certain afternoon at five o'clock she would give them one hundred dollars. Her plan was that while Campbell and the two guards were eating supper



four Confederate soldiers would rush in, fire their pistols into the air, and capture Campbell, no harm being done to the two Federals.

On their way from the prison to Miss Fickle's home with Campbell the two soldiers met a second lieutenant who belonged to their company. When he inquired where they were going with the prisoner they replied that the provost marshal had given them permission to take supper with Miss Fickle. The lieutenant thereupon announced his intention of accompanying them, and as he was their superior officer they could not deny him the privilege. They continued on their way, intending, when they reached the house, to tell Miss Fickle that the lieutenant was ignorant of the plan that had been laid and the escape would have to be postponed. When they arrived, however, Miss Fickle was busy serving supper and they had no opportunity to inform her of the situation. In a few minutes they were invited to take seats at the table, and they had scarcely begun to eat when the four Confederates rushed in. The lieutenant, being ignorant of the plan, drew his revolver and shot one Confederate dead on the spot. The others then fired on the lieutenant, and the guards, suspecting treachery, also began shooting. A fierce fight ensued, and when it ended the lieutenant and one Federal guard and Campbell and one Confederate were dead.

For this affair Miss Fickle was arrested, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. Before her trial took place she was sent to St. Louis and kept in the female prison on Eighth Street, immediately opposite Gratiot. The windows of the hospital were directly opposite the female prison and I made an "across-the-street" acquaint-

ance with Miss Fickle. With her own hands she embroidered some mementoes for me, a needlecase (which I still have) being one of her gifts.

The trusty who agreed to deliver the notes I had written to Miss Lobbins and Miss Fickle did not do as he had promised, but gave them instead to the prison warden, P. T. Miller, on Saturday evening. Sunday morning the yard boss, Bennett, came to the hospital and informed me that Warden Miller wanted to see me in the "old hall." This was a large apartment in one of the cell buildings which ran all around the cells, between them and the outer walls of the building. When I entered the hall Miller was seated in a chair near a table. Two deputy wardens, George and William Douglas, and two convicts, together with Bennett and myself, were present. Miller handed me the two notes and asked me if I knew anything about them. I told him I had written them. He inquired why I had written them. I answered, "The two notes explain themselves about as well as any explanation I can give, Mr. Miller." He said, "Don't you know that it is against the rules of this prison to send any notes—whether in or out of the prison—without sending them through the office?" I replied that I had not seen any rules and regulations governing the prison and did not know that it was against the rules. He said he would teach me that I could not run any underground mail business in the prison during his régime. I told him that I was sorry that I had violated the rules and that I would not do so again. He said he would teach me a lesson I would not soon forget, and ordered me to step up to the whipping-post. I told him I was a military prisoner and that if he was determined to punish me he should

do so in a military manner—that before he did so I would demand a military investigation into the matter before the prison authorities. He said I would not get any investigation, that he was the boss of that prison, and again ordered me to step up to the whipping-post. I refused positively to do so.

It was a large post about eight inches square and ten feet high and stood in the center of the hall. In the post, about seven feet from the floor, was a bolt with one end protruding six inches. When I refused to go to the post Miller grabbed one of my crutches from under my arm and struck me on the head with it, knocking me down on the stone floor. He then ordered Bennett and the two convicts to tie me up to the post. They took a strong cord and while I lay on the floor they tied my wrists together and hung me, by the cord around my wrists, over the bolt, which was as high as I could reach as I stood on the floor without crutches. Miller then said, “Give him one hundred lashes!” The hospital blouse I had worn had been removed while I lay on the floor, and I had nothing on my back but a cotton shirt and a thin undershirt.

While I was thus suspended by the wrists they struck me, by actual count out loud, one hundred lashes. It will be needless for me to undertake to describe the terrible agony caused by each stroke of the whip! It was made of three leather straps about two feet long fastened to a short wooden handle, thus making three strokes every time the convict counted a single stroke. After the hundred lashes had been struck Miller said, “Now, Grimes, do you think you can behave yourself and abide by the rules of the prison while you are here?” I said, “Mr. Miller, I

said all I possibly could say before you began to flog me!" He said to Bennett, "Give him another hundred lashes."

When they had struck and counted sixty-one lashes George Douglas said, "Mr. Miller, don't you think you are rather severe?" Miller made no reply, but immediately left the hall and Douglas told Bennett to stop. I was taken down from the post and carried by the two convicts to the west side of the building, down a pair of stairs and placed in a dark, underground dungeon. That night about ten o'clock Douglas came to the dungeon and said, "Mr. Grimes, I am very sorry to see you in here and I think if you will send Mr. Miller word that you are sorry for what you have done and request him to send you to the hospital he will order you returned there." I answered: "Mr. Douglas, I do not care now, after the treatment I have received, whether I ever get out of this dungeon. I feel like I want to die as soon as possible." He had a lantern with him and upon examination he found that my back was cut in bloody stripes from the nape of my neck to the lower end of my spine. The thongs had cut through the two shirts like a knife. I had no soothing remedies of any kind and nothing was given me to apply to my lacerated back. My sufferings were beyond description for two days and nights. During my confinement in the dungeon my diet was a quart of water and four slices of bread once a day. I had no bed except a wooden bench fourteen inches wide, built along a side wall, and there was no blanket or pad of any kind. I had no light. I could not stand on my wounded leg without crutches, and they had been taken from me.

Mr. Douglas came to see me every night and on the

Sunday following the brutal abuse I had received he said: "Mr. Grimes, I am going to take the responsibility upon myself to have you carried back to the hospital. I am sure you will treat me right in this matter." "I am very thankful for the kindness you have shown me," I replied. He requested me to come out of the dungeon. When I crawled out, and drew a breath of fresh air (that of the closed underground dungeon was very foul) I fainted, and Douglas called four convicts to carry me to the hospital, where I lay unconscious four hours. After being placed on a comfortable bed and given good food I began to gain strength.

Two days after my return to the hospital a man named Clark, an engineer, who had just finished a five-year sentence for counterfeiting, was to be released. He said to me: "Captain, I am going to St. Louis to-day. If there is anything I can do for you let me know and I will do my best for you." I asked him to go to Captain Hudson L. Downs, who resided on Fifth Street just north of Franklin Avenue, and tell him of the brutal abuse I had received during the last ten days.

The day after he left me Colonel Walker D. Wear, who was in command of the military force at Jefferson City, consisting of three regiments of Federal soldiers, came into the hospital accompanied by Warden Miller, who introduced Colonel Wear to me. The latter said, "Captain Grimes, I have just received a telegram from the War Department, ordering me to investigate the trouble between you and the prison authorities." I began to relate the cruel treatment which I had undergone, when Miller interrupted me. Colonel Wear turned to him and said,



“Mr. Miller, I think you are guilty of an infernal outrage in the treatment of this man, and if you lay your hand on another military prisoner I will hold you accountable.” Miller said no more. After I had related the whole story Colonel Wear seemed much concerned and bade me a cordial good-bye. Between one and two o’clock that same night George Douglas came to me and said, “Captain, I have some good news for you.” “I am mighty glad to hear some good news,” I replied, “as I have had nothing but bad tidings and bad treatment for so long.” He said they had just received a telegram from President Lincoln ordering my release from the penitentiary at once, unconditionally. “You are at liberty to go now,” he added, “but I think it would not be best for you to go out into the cold to-night.” Of course, there was no more sleep for me that night! I rejoiced over the glorious fact that I was to leave the prison next morning a free man. I had been in prison ever since my capture on the eve of my wedding day in Memphis, thirteen months before.

After eating my breakfast I made my way very slowly on two crutches up to the prison office. Warden Miller was standing at his desk. He remarked, “Well, I presume you have come for your discharge.” While he was writing my discharge he said: “Grimes, you are one of the most impulsive men I ever met in my life. When you take a notion to do anything you never stop to count the cost or results and I hope that the experience you have had during the war will be beneficial to you in after life.” “The experience I have had in this penitentiary,” I replied, “is one that I will never forget and is one that YOU will have to answer for whenever we meet outside of Jefferson

City!" Miller said, "Shut up, sir; you cannot talk to me like that!" I said, "I am no convict and have just as much right to talk to you as you have to talk to me!" He then told two trustees who were cleaning the office to take me out and put me in the road. They took hold of my arms and led me out of the door and I did not need any pushing. I was glad enough to go.

The date on my pardon was December 1, 1864, whereon I was ordered released by the President. I was to take the oath of allegiance to the United States and give five thousand dollars' bond to keep out of the war. Miller kept me prisoner until Colonel Wear received a telegram from President Lincoln to release me at once, unconditionally, and Wear forced Miller to release me on the tenth of December, 1864. Miller had paid no attention to the pardon, which he had when he beat me, knowing at the time that I was to be released. It was on November 27 that the brutal beating was administered, for no other reason than Miller's personal gratification of his brutal nature.

I had not traveled more than a hundred yards from the prison when I was overtaken by the bookkeeper, a very kindly gentleman, whose name was Jackson, I believe. He said he must go uptown with me and get me a suit of clothing. I told him the suit I had on was good enough for me, but he said I could not get away with that suit of stripes on, that I would be arrested and carried back to the penitentiary. I realized the wisdom of his statement and he went with me to a clothing store kept by a Hebrew firm. I was given a suit that cost seven dollars and received five dollars in cash. I presume this gift was to prevent my stealing until I could get outside of Jefferson City.

After buying the suit for me the bookkeeper

pointed out a beautiful residence a short distance away and said, "That is the residence of General Shields and I would advise you to go there and you will find excellent Southern friends." I did go there and was kindly received. I met there a young lady who was an intimate friend of Captain Downs' family of St. Louis. Captain Hudson L. Downs was the master of government steamboat transportation at St. Louis. Captain Tom L. Taylor, an old river pilot with whom I had stood many a watch on the upper Mississippi, was now a pilot on the *Wisconsin*, one of the Federal gunboats on the lower Mississippi. These two men, together with Mrs. Downs, had been the principal workers for my pardon, and had enlisted signers for the petition to President Lincoln which caused him first to commute my sentence and then to pardon me.

I left Jefferson City for St. Louis in a hack that was crowded with passengers, as the railroads had not been repaired since General Price's raid. We traveled in the hack to the mouth of the Moreau River, which we crossed on a flatboat ferry. We then took a train of box cars for St. Louis. The weather was very cold, the mercury being from eight to ten degrees below zero during the trip. I suffered much with cold, as I was lightly clad and my back was still very sore and raw. However, I was so happy to be free that nothing else was considered.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

### PEACEFUL YEARS

ON my arrival in St. Louis I went immediately to the residence of Captain Downs, where I was received with open arms and provided with many comforts. My Confederate friends visited me and supplied me with everything necessary to comfort, both present and future. I was still on crutches and in no condition to work, because of my wounded leg and lacerated back. I remained in Captain Downs' home until December 23, when I accepted an invitation to visit Mrs. Marion Wall Vail, who was living on a farm near Pendleton, Missouri.

I reached Pendleton by train about noon December 24, and was met by Mrs. Vail, who conveyed me to her home about four miles out of town. She had two children, Owen, aged fourteen, and Cora, aged twelve. Several neighbors were invited in and we had a grand time on Christmas eve. On Christmas morning while Mrs. Vail was preparing breakfast I went into the sitting-room and was putting on my shoes when I felt a premonition of danger. It seemed as if someone were standing by my side and spoke directly in my ear in a low voice, "Leave here and go to Hannibal!" I was astonished and puzzled. In a moment I again seemed to hear the words, "Leave here and go to Hannibal." I was amazed and wondered if I was losing my mind! I had never been superstitious and could not understand such a warning. Mrs. Vail

entered the room and I said, "Aunt Wall, I am going to Hannibal!" Jokingly she answered, "Well, good-bye if you are gone." I told her I was in earnest. Her face wore an expression of wonder as I related the peculiar warning I had received. She said: "Ab, under the circumstances I shall not try to persuade you to remain. Something might happen to you. These are strenuous times. When do you want to go?" We decided on the first train. We reached the station just five minutes before the train pulled out and I went to Hannibal.

As I stepped from the train I was arrested by John Fry, sheriff of Marion County, and an old acquaintance of mine. I told him of my release from the penitentiary and my pardon by President Lincoln. He asked to see the pardon, which I had left at the residence of Captain Downs in St. Louis, as I had not anticipated I would need it. He said, "Ab, knowing as I do your career during this war, your escapades and escapes, I will have to take you to Colonel Taylor, who is in command of the District of Hannibal." Waiting on the platform to greet me were my sweetheart, Miss Glascock, and her brother Stephen. I had wired them I was coming and they had come in a carriage to take me to their home twelve miles southwest of Hannibal. When I was arrested my heart sank within me, as it seemed as if the world and every man's hand was against me and no hope of freedom existed for me.

I was very cordially greeted by Colonel Taylor when we arrived at his headquarters. I had met him in Gratiot prison, where he had visited me under a very peculiar misunderstanding regarding some letters, which I had made clear to him in a satisfactory



manner and thereby had won his friendship. He called me by the familiar name of "Ab," and said, "How is it that you are way up here?" He was unaware that my home was in Ralls County. I explained matters briefly and told him I had left my pardon at Captain Downs' home and suggested that he telegraph there to ascertain the truth of my statement. Miss Glascock and her brother were present in his office and told him they had come to take me to their home to spend the holidays. Colonel Taylor had heard of her and of our long engagement and our disappointment at Memphis more than a year since. He said: "I do not doubt the truth of your statement, but I dare not turn you loose without some evidence that you have been pardoned. Can you give ten thousand dollars' bond to appear here in a week and during that time have your pardon sent to me?" I told him I thought I could arrange it, and asked if the firm of Hawes & Armstrong would be satisfactory bondsmen. He assented. His office was over the dry-goods store of that firm and the building was their property. Stephen Glascock went downstairs and in a few minutes George Hawes and Jesse Armstrong came up and told Colonel Taylor to make out the bond and they would sign it. They signed it and I was soon in the carriage with my sweetheart and her brother and we started for the James Glascock homestead. A few days later I received a letter from Colonel Taylor stating that he had received the pardon and that it was unnecessary for me to report at his office until it suited my convenience. This news made me very happy and things seemed to take a turn for the better.

After I had been at the Glascock home a few days I received from Mrs. Vail a long letter whose con-

tents made my hair stand on end in every direction. She stated that about ten o'clock on the night of the day I left her house about twenty cavalrymen belonging to Jennison's command, which was encamped some ten or twelve miles from Pendleton, rode up to the place. The men kicked the door open and entered without knocking, or any other formality. Mrs. Vail and her two children and her sister, Mrs. Tesson, had retired for the night. Miss Sallie Corder, a guest, was seated by the stove in the sitting room with her brother, Jack Corder. They lived a mile distant and Jack had gone over to call on his sister. His horse was tied to the fence in front of the house.

When the soldiers kicked the door open Mrs. Vail and her sister went downstairs in their nightdresses. The soldiers inquired for me, and Mrs. Vail told them I had gone to Hannibal that morning. They contradicted her statement and roughly ordered all the inmates of the house out into the yard, notwithstanding the fact that it was snowing and the ladies were barefooted. The men then searched the house for me. They emptied the bureau drawers but found no valuables, as the house had been thoroughly searched and robbed several times previously. At length the ladies were ordered to go into the house and the Federals stated that they would take Jack Corder with them to their camp. Instead, they took a rope they had brought for the purpose of hanging me, tied one end around Corder's neck and threw the other end over a limb of a tree in the yard, pulled him up about eight feet from the ground, made the rope fast, and drove off. The women and children were watching from an upper window but could not see just what they were doing on account of the darkness and the

snow. As soon as the men were gone they ran down into the yard and found poor Corder hanging on the rope. Before they could get him down he was dead. What mysterious force was it that had warned me to leave?

After this awful crime I decided most positively that the country was not a safe place for me, and immediately after New Year's day I went to St. Louis and made my home with Captain Downs' family. I corresponded with my fiancée and on March 7, 1865, we were married at her home. We had been engaged seven long years. By the same ceremony were united in marriage her sister, Betty Glascock, and William Glascock. He was a member of another family by the same name. We four went to St. Louis and then took a honeymoon trip to New Orleans on the steamer *Henry Von Phul* as guests of my old comrade, Sam Bowen. He had recently left the *Graham*, and was pilot on the *Von Phul* at a salary of five hundred dollars per month. Captain James Allen also extended us an invitation to take the trip. Tom Byrnes was Sam Bowen's partner as pilot of the *Von Phul*. On this trip life seemed all sunshine, and we were very happy, indeed.

After our return to St. Louis I went as pilot up the Missouri River on the steamer *Alone*. Later I went on the *Hannibal* to Omaha, Nebraska. Her cargo of railroad iron was the first laid down at Omaha. After one more trip I procured a license as a Missouri River pilot with a salary of eight hundred dollars per month. Next spring I returned to the Missouri River, after passing the winter piloting on the lower Mississippi, and was installed as pilot on the James Mephram & Brothers steamers. I piloted on the

two rivers until 1870, when I went into the confectionery business in Hannibal, as we now had three children and I wanted to be at home with my family. We moved to St. Louis in 1872. I was pilot on the first excursion boat at St. Louis, the *Colorado*, owned by Peter Manion. The *Chas. P. Chouteau* and the *Helena* were soon in the excursion trade I had started. I last piloted on the *Charles Morgan*, the largest steamer in service at St. Louis, in 1883.

The second trip I made on the *Hannibal* loaded with railroad iron and bound for Omaha we took aboard at St. Louis about three hundred ex-Confederate soldiers. The war was over and they had been paroled by the Federals and wanted to go to their homes in Missouri and other states up the Missouri River. The government had provided them with transportation as far as St. Louis. The boat on which they traveled from New Orleans landed at St. Louis alongside the *Hannibal* and they were soon transferred. Captain James Townsend said he would delay the boat's departure while I went among Confederate friends and obtained rations for them on the trip. I went to that whole-souled old gentleman, Joseph Garneau, who gave us many boxes of crackers and a large quantity of bread. Mr. A. W. Fagan, although he was a Republican, gave us two barrels of flour. Mr. Garneau went with me and we called at several places. He had a manner and character no one could resist when he made a request. In less than two hours we had enough rations to feed the Confederates a month.

On our trip some of the boys disembarked at every landing. They had written their friends they were coming and we were met by large crowds every-

where. Many happy reunions took place. Some had not seen their loved ones for four awful years and had suffered many hardships during their absence. Many people failed to find their boys—they had died during the war.

About a mile below Rocheport Landing a man who was in the act of drawing a bucket of water was jerked overboard in some way and before the boat's yawl could reach him he was drowned. It was a lovely Sunday morning and there was a big crowd on the bank waiting to meet the soldiers on the boat. A number of men were to disembark there and their friends made a charge on them. Standing to one side was a lady with three small children, aged about five to ten years. One of the soldiers stepped up to her and sadly told her as best he could that her husband had just been drowned about a mile below the landing! She fainted at once. As the steamer pulled away we could see her friends trying to console her. Can you conceive what a sad scene that was? A noble Confederate soldier who had braved all the dangers incident to the war, been starved, wounded, and imprisoned, was paroled and carried home only to be drowned when almost within sight of his wife and babies! The horrors of war are many and varied.

In the year 1866 I made a trip to Fort Benton, Montana, on the *Gold Finch*. She was a slow traveler, but well fitted up. We had on board about twenty ladies, forty men, and a dozen or more children, who were on a pleasure trip to Fort Benton. After we passed Fort Randall, about twelve hundred miles from St. Louis, we saw but few white people and plenty of Indians. Beyond old Fort Pierre we saw but one white man, except at Forts Sully and Berthold.



After passing Fort Pierre we saw hundreds of antelope and some deer, also a few buffaloes. Above Fort Berthold buffaloes were plentiful along the river banks, there being sometimes as many as two hundred in one drove. There were many antelope, elk, and wolves, and occasionally a bear or two, prowling about on the prairies.

On the upper Missouri there are many big bends from five to twenty miles around by water but only one to three across by land. As there was plenty of big game to be had many of our passengers took their guns and walked across the narrow necks of land and hunted while the boat was going around the bend. As the current was very swift it would take the boat from one to four hours to go around and it would be out of sight of the hunters nearly all the time. We had aboard a jolly, whole-souled bachelor, Dr. Harlow, about forty years old, a great favorite with the ladies. One day Dr. Harlow left the boat to hunt across a neck of land. His companion was Joe Simmons, a big, overgrown young fellow, who weighed about two hundred and twenty-five pounds and was the target for most of the jokes of the passengers. The boat was more than three hours getting around to a point where the doctor and Joe expected to wait for us. The country was open, with plenty of hills but no timber. As we drew near the landing with the men nowhere in sight the captain became very uneasy, and everyone on board became anxious over their safety. The boat proceeded, keeping a sharp lookout for them, until we drew near a small clump of crab-apple trees and sagebrush. When we were within about three hundred yards of the trees out stepped the doctor and Joe Simmons. Suffering sinners! The sight

they presented caused us to gasp with amazement. A Masonic apron of red calico cloth was all, aside from their socks, that adorned their bodies. When we came within shouting distance everyone on board began to guy the two men.

After they had been fitted out with civilized clothing and we were again en route up the river the doctor told us the story of their adventure. A band of Indians on ponies had taken them captive and carried them to their camp, where about thirty bucks and squaws made them take off every rag of clothing except their socks. The clothing was divided among the eight bucks who had captured them. The doctor's fine gold watch and chain and diamond stud and Joe's watch and chain and diamond scarf pin were among the spoils. The doctor still had on a plain gold ring which the bucks did not seem disposed to take from him, but one of the squaws fancied it and tried to remove it from his finger. The doctor objected and she got a knife to cut it off. He then pointed to a calico skirt she wore and made signs that he would trade the ring for the skirt; he knew she would get the ring anyway. The squaw jerked off the skirt, which was about all she had on, and traded with him for the ring. Then the Indians motioned and said, "Steamboat." After the two men had left the camp they tore the skirt in two and draped themselves in the two fragments as best they could.

The following spring (1867) I was pilot on the *Carrie V. Kountz*, with Captain Dan Brady in command. I was employed on a contract for three years at eight hundred dollars per month, eight months of the year. With the exception of my partner, William Gregory, and myself, the entire crew from captain

to decksweeper were Pittsburg men. We had no passengers this trip and we two pilots were the only men aboard who had ever been up the Missouri River. The boat had been loaded at Pittsburg with a cargo exclusively for Fort Benton, Montana. This was long-distance freighting, requiring six weeks' time each way. The crew had been told at St. Louis that thousands of bears, elk, deer, moose, wolves, panthers, and Indians infested the banks of the river. By the time we reached St. Charles they were on the watch for big game and before we arrived at Kansas City they were ready to swear it was all false and that no game existed. Still, the burden of their conversation was buffaloes and bears.

Finally, one morning when all hands were at breakfast, about one hundred miles above Fort Berthold, I saw a buffalo cow down under the bank in a kind of washed-out cave, or recess. She had evidently either fallen down there or had swum across the river and landed there. The animal was on a crescent-shaped bit of beach, about one hundred feet long by twenty-five feet wide. She was pacing to and fro, trying to find a way out without swimming. I tapped the big bell a couple of times and when the captain appeared on deck I pointed out the animal to him. Such excitement! He ordered the steamer run within three hundred yards of the shore and anchored. The anticipation aboard was immense. A little Smith & Wesson revolver was the sole firearm aboard the boat, excepting a fine repeating rifle between my matresses that I never once called to mind. We had an extra large yawl that would carry, by crowding, forty men. This was promptly filled to capacity. The captain stood in the prow like Washington crossing the

Delaware, while the balance of the crew were closely packed behind him. They were armed with all kinds of weapons—knives, cleavers, capstan bars, pokers, pikepoles, and monkey-wrenches—to annihilate that one buffalo cow. I remarked to my partner, who was with me in the pilot house, “Now, Bill, you are about to behold the greatest battle you ever saw, and it will not last long.”

As the boat neared the cow she paced to and fro in her small confine, bawling and pawing up the ground, while her tail waved in the air like the bat of an amateur ball player. When the yawl neared the bank the captain fired his little pistol and the ball stung the cow a little. As the bow of the yawl grounded on the beach—before the men had any chance to get out—the cow charged the boatload of buffalo murderers! She went into the boat at the bow and out at the stern, and the frantic efforts of the cow trying to get in and the crew trying to get out capsized the boat. The current was swift and the water not less than eight feet deep, and it was a miracle that all managed to escape drowning. Down the river swam the cow, while the would-be slayers were busily engaged in getting each other out of the water and righting the yawl. All came back soaking wet and most of them without their weapons. The cookhouse and the blacksmith shop were short of utensils and tools and the captain lost his little pistol in that naval engagement.

A few days later while the captain was at dinner I saw two buffaloes not far from the river bank. I went in and told him there were two buffaloes in sight. He said: “To hell with the buffaloes! They do not belong to me,” and kept on eating his dinner.

In the year 1878 I took my wife and three children (our eldest son had died) and with a party of friends visited the old Gratiot Street prison. It was like the abandoned ruins of old castles which writers of fiction describe. Bats and pigeons were aroused by our intrusion and flew about the deserted, silent rooms. Most of the flooring had been torn up and carried away; the outer walls, especially those that separated the prison from the Christian Brothers' College, showed where they had been cut in thirty or more places by prisoners who had tried to escape. A great many had succeeded, for when they were once inside the College they were shown the street door and no questions were asked them.

My old marks were still visible on the walls, and I had the pleasant task of answering the many questions asked by my children concerning my sojourn in that once thriving hostelry. I pulled out and brought away with me a large spike which had been driven into the casing of my window to hang a lantern on so that the guard might see what was transpiring in my room. I searched the ground where I had buried my ball and chain in October, 1862, but failed to find it. I wanted to keep it as a souvenir of that escape. However, I have the rivets from the shackle and the handcuffs. I also have the scars left by the two bullets that hit me when I tried to escape on June 18, 1864, and the marks of Warden Miller's villainy on my back.





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